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ANGE PITOU

VOLUME II

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

ANGE PITOU

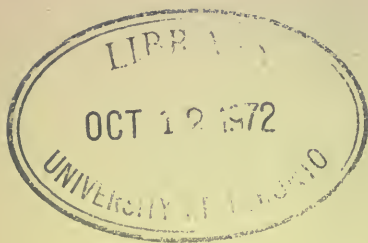
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TAKING THE BASTILE

VOLUME II



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ANGE PITOU

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT THE QUEEN'S THOUGHTS WERE DURING THE NIGHT
FROM JULY 14 TO JULY 15, 1789.

How long the interview between Andrée and the queen lasted, it would be impossible for us to say; but it was certainly of considerable duration, for at about eleven o'clock that night the door of the queen's boudoir was seen to open, and on the threshold Andrée, almost on her knees, kissing the hand of Marie Antoinette. After which, having raised herself up, the young woman dried her eyes, red with weeping, while the queen on her side re-entered her room.

Andrée, on the contrary, walked away rapidly, as if she desired to escape from her own thoughts.

After this the queen was alone. When the lady of the bedchamber entered the room, to assist her in undressing, she found her pacing the room with rapid strides, and her eyes flashing with excitement. She made a quick movement with her hand, which meant to say, "Leave me."

The lady of the bedchamber left the room, without offering an observation.

The queen again found herself alone. She had given orders that no one should disturb her, unless it was to announce the arrival of important news from Paris.

Andrée did not appear again.

As for the king, after he had conversed with M. de la Rochefoucault,—who endeavoured to make him comprehend the difference there was between a riot and a revolution,—he declared himself fatigued, went to bed, and slept as quietly as if he had returned from a hunt, and the stag (a well-trained courtier) had suffered himself to be taken in the grand basin of the fountain called the Swiss.

The queen, however, wrote several letters, went into an adjoining room, where her two children slept under the care of Madame de Tourzel, and then went to bed, not for the sake of sleeping, like the king, but merely to meditate more at ease.

But soon after, when silence reigned around Versailles, when the immense palace became plunged in darkness, when there could no longer be heard in the gardens aught but the tramp of the patrols upon the gravel walks, and in the long passages nothing but the ringing of muskets on the marble pavement, Marie Antoinette, tired of repose, felt the want of air, got out of bed, and, putting on her velvet slippers and a long white dressing-gown, went to the window to inhale the ascending freshness of the cascades, and to seize in their flight those counsels which the night winds murmur to heated minds and oppressed hearts.

Then she reviewed in her mind all the astounding events which this strange day had produced.

The fall of the Bastile, that visible emblem of royal power,—the uncertainties of Charny, her devoted friend,—that impassioned captive who for so many years had been subjected to her yoke, and who during all those years had never breathed anything but love, now seemed for the first time to sigh from regret and feelings of remorse.

With that synthetic habit with which the knowledge of men and events endows great minds, Marie Antoinette immediately divided the agitation which oppressed her into two portions, the one being her political misfortunes, the other the sorrows of her heart.

The political misfortune was that great event, the news

of which had left Paris at three o'clock in the afternoon, and was then spreading itself over the whole world, and weakening in every mind that sacred reverence which until then had always been accorded to kings, God's mandatories upon earth.

The sorrow of her heart was the gloomy resistance of Charny to the omnipotence of his well-beloved sovereign. It appeared to her like a presentiment, that, without ceasing to be faithful and devoted, his love would cease to be blind, and might begin to argue with itself on its fidelity and its devotedness.

This thought grieved the queen's heart poignantly, and filled it with that bitter gall which is called jealousy, an acrid poison which ulcerates at the same instant a thousand little wounds in a wounded soul.

Nevertheless, grief in the presence of misfortune was logically an inferiority.

Thus, rather from reasoning than from conscientious motives, rather from necessity than from instinct, Marie Antoinette first allowed her mind to enter into the grave reflections connected with the dangerous state of political affairs.

In which direction could she turn? Before her lay hatred and ambition,—weakness and indifference at her side. For enemies, she had people who, having commenced with calumny, were now organising a rebellion. People whom, consequently, no consideration would induce to retreat.

For defenders — we speak of the greater portion at least of those men who, little by little, had accustomed themselves to endure everything, and who, in consequence, no longer felt the depth of their wounds, their degradation,—people who would hesitate to defend themselves for fear of attracting attention.

It was therefore necessary to bury everything in oblivion, — to appear to forget, and yet to remember, — to feign to forgive, and yet not pardon.

This would be conduct unworthy of a Queen of France : it was especially unworthy of the daughter of Maria Theresa, — that high-minded woman.

To resist ! — to resist ! — that was what offended royal pride most strenuously counselled. But was it prudent to resist ? Could hatred be calmed down by shedding blood ? Was it not terrible to be surnamed "The Austrian" ? Was it necessary, in order to consecrate that name, as Isabeau and Catherine de Médicis had consecrated theirs, to give it the baptism of a universal massacre ?

And then, if what Charny had said was true, success was doubtful.

To combat and to be defeated !

Such were the political sorrows of the queen, who during certain phases of her meditation felt a sensation like that which we experience on seeing a serpent glide from beneath the brambles, awakened by our advancing steps. She felt, on emerging from the depths of her sufferings as a queen, the despair of the woman who thinks herself but little loved, when in reality she had been loved too much.

Charny had said what we have already heard him say, not from conviction, but from lassitude. He had, like many others, drunk calumny from the same cup that she had. Charny, for the first time, had spoken in such affectionate terms of his wife, Andrée being until then almost forgotten by her husband. Had Charny then perceived that his young wife was still beautiful ? And at this single idea, which stung her like the envenomed bite of the asp, Marie Antoinette was astounded to find that misfortune was nothing in comparison with sorrow.

For what misfortune had failed to do, grief was gradually effecting within her soul. The woman sprang furiously from the chair in which the queen had calmly contemplated danger.

The whole destiny of this privileged child of suffering revealed itself in the condition of her mind during that night.

For, how was it possible to escape misfortune and grief at the same time? she would ask herself, with constantly renewing anguish. Was it necessary to determine on abandoning a life of royalty, and could she live happily in a state of mediocrity? Was it necessary to return to her own Trianon, and to her Swiss cottage, to the quiet shores of the lake and the humble amusements of the dairy? Was it necessary to allow the people to divide among them the shreds of monarchy, excepting some few fragments which the woman could appropriate to herself from the contested revenues of a few faithful servants, who would still persist in considering themselves her vassals?

Alas! it was now that the serpent of jealousy began to sting still deeper.

Happy! Could she be happy with the humiliation of despised love?

Happy! Could she be happy by the side of the king, — that vulgar husband, in whom everything was deficient to form the hero?

Happy! Could she be happy with Monsieur de Charny, who might be so with some woman whom he loved, — by the side of his own wife, perhaps?

And this thought kindled in the poor queen's breast all those flaming torches which consumed Dido even more than her funeral pile.

But in the midst of this feverish torture she saw a ray of hope: in the midst of this shuddering anguish, she felt a sensation of joy. God, in his infinite mercy, has he not created evil to make us appreciate good?

Andrée had intrusted the queen with all her secrets; she had unveiled the one shame of her life to her rival. Andrée, her eyes full of tears, her head bowed down to the ground, had confessed to the queen that she was no longer worthy of the love and the respect of an honourable man; therefore Charny could never love Andrée.

But Charny is ignorant of this; Charny will ever be ignorant of that catastrophe at Trianon, and its conse-

quences. Therefore, to Charny, it is as if the catastrophe had never taken place.

And while making these reflections, the queen examined her fading beauty in the mirror of her mind, and deplored the loss of her gayety, the freshness of her youth.

Then she thought of Andrée, of the strange and almost incredible adventures which she had just related to her.

She wondered at the magical working of blind fortune, which had brought to Trianon, from the shade of a hut and the muddy furrows of a farm, a little gardener's boy, to associate his destinies with those of a highly born young lady, who was herself associated with the destinies of a queen.

"Thus," said she to herself, "the atom which was thus lost in the lowest regions has come, by a freak of superior attraction, to unite itself, like a fragment of a diamond, with the heavenly light of the stars."

This gardener's boy, this Gilbert, was he not a living symbol of that which was occurring at that moment, — a man of the people, rising from the lowness of his birth to busy himself with the politics of a great kingdom, — a strange comedian, in whom were personified, by a privilege granted to him by the evil spirit, who was then hovering over France, not only the insult offered to the nobility, but also the attack made upon the monarchy by a plebeian mob?

This Gilbert, now become a learned man, — this Gilbert, dressed in the black coat of the Tiers Etat, the counsellor of Monsieur de Necker, the confidant of the King of France, would now find himself, thanks to the revolution, on an equal footing with the woman whose honour, like a thief, he had stolen in the night.

The queen had again become a woman, and, shuddering in spite of herself at the sad story related by Andrée, she was endeavouring to study the character of this Gilbert, and to learn by herself to read in human features what God has placed there to indicate so strange a character;

and, notwithstanding the pleasure she had experienced on seeing the humiliation of her rival, she still felt a lingering desire to attack the man who had caused a woman such intensity of suffering.

Moreover, notwithstanding the terror generally inspired by the sight of monsters, she felt a desire to look at, and perhaps even to admire, this extraordinary man, who by a crime had infused his vile blood into the most aristocratic veins in France; this man who appeared to have organised the revolution, in order that it should open the gates of the Bastile for him, in which, but for that revolution, he would have remained immured forever, to teach him that a plebeian must remember nothing.

In consequence of this connecting link in her ideas, the queen reverted to her political vexations, and saw the responsibility of all she had suffered accumulate upon one single head.

Thus the author of the popular rebellion that had just shaken the royal power by levelling the Bastile was Gilbert; he whose principles had placed weapons in the hands of the Billots, the Maillards, the Elies, and the Hullins.

Gilbert was, therefore, both a venomous and a terrible being; — venomous, because he had caused the loss of Andrée as a lover; terrible, because he had just assisted in overthrowing the Bastile as an enemy.

It was therefore necessary to know, in order to avoid him; or rather to know him, in order to make use of him.

It was necessary, at any cost, to converse with this man, to examine him closely, and to judge him personally.

Two thirds of the night had already flown away, three o'clock was striking, and the first rays of the rising sun gilded the high tops of the trees in the park, and the summits of the statues of Versailles.

The queen had passed the whole night without sleeping; her dimmed vision lost itself in the shaded streaks of the mild light.

A heavy and burning slumber gradually seized the unfortunate woman.

She fell back, with her neck overhanging the back of the arm-chair, near the open window.

She dreamed that she was walking in Trianon, and that there appeared to her eyes, at the extremity of a flower-bed, a grinning gnome, similar to those we read of in German ballads; that this sardonic monster was Gilbert, who extended his hooked fingers towards her.

She screamed aloud.

Another cry answered hers.

That cry roused her from her slumber.

It was Madame de Tourzel who had uttered it. She had just entered the queen's apartment, and seeing her exhausted and gasping in an arm-chair, she could not avoid giving utterance to her grief and surprise.

"The queen is indisposed!" she exclaimed. "The queen is suffering. Shall I send for a physician?"

The queen opened her eyes. This question of Madame de Tourzel coincided with the demands of her own curiosity.

"Yes, a physician!" she replied; "Doctor Gilbert! send for Doctor Gilbert!"

"Who is Doctor Gilbert?" asked Madame de Tourzel.

"A new physician, appointed by the king only yesterday, I believe, and just arrived from America."

"I know who her Majesty means," said one of the queen's ladies in waiting, who had rushed into the room on hearing Madame de Tourzel scream.

"Well?" said the queen, inquiringly.

"Well, madame, the doctor is in the king's ante-chamber."

"Do you know him, then?"

"Yes, your Majesty," stammered the woman.

"But how can you know him? He arrived here from America some eight or ten days ago, and only came out of the Bastille yesterday."

"I know him."

"Answer me distinctly. Where did you know him?" asked the queen, in an imperious tone.

The lady cast down her eyes.

"Come, will you make up your mind to tell me how it happens that you know this man?"

"Madame, I have read his works; and his works having given me a desire to see the author, I had him pointed out to me."

"Ah!" exclaimed the queen, with an indescribable look of haughtiness and reserve,—"ah! it is well. Since you know him, go and tell him that I am suffering, and that I wish to see him."

While waiting for the doctor's arrival, the queen made her ladies in attendance enter the room; after which she put on a dressing-gown, and adjusted her hair.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE KING'S PHYSICIAN.

A FEW moments after the queen had expressed the above desire, — a desire which the person to whom it had been mentioned had complied with, — Gilbert, who felt astonished, slightly anxious, and profoundly agitated, but still without showing any external marks of it, presented himself to Marie Antoinette.

The firm and noble carriage; the delicate pallor of the man of science and of thought, to whom study had given a second nature, — a pallor still more enhanced by the black dress, which was not only worn by all the deputies of the Tiers Etat, but also by those who had adopted the principles of the revolution; the delicate white hand of the surgical operator, surrounded by a plain muslin wristband; his slender though well-formed limbs, which none of those at court could surpass in symmetry, even in the estimation of the connoisseurs of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*; combined with all these, there was a mixture of respectful timidity towards the woman, and of calm courage towards the patient, but no signs of servility towards her as a queen; — such were the plainly written signs that Marie Antoinette, with her aristocratic intelligence, could perceive in the countenance of Gilbert at the moment when the door opened to admit him into her bedchamber.

But the less Gilbert was provoking in his demeanour, the more did the queen feel her anger increase. She had figured him to herself as a type of an odious class of men; she had considered him instinctively, though almost in-

voluntarily, as one of those impudent heroes of which she had so many around her. The author of the sufferings of Andrée, the bastard pupil of Rousseau, that miserable abortion who had grown up to manhood, that pruner of trees who had become a philosopher and a subduer of souls, — Marie Antoinette in spite of herself depicted him in her mind as having the features of Mirabeau, — that is to say, of the man she most hated after the Cardinal de Rohan and Lafayette.

It had seemed to her, before she saw Gilbert, that it required a gigantic physical development to contain so colossal a mind.

But when she saw a young, upright, and slender man, of elegant and graceful form, of sweet and amiable countenance, he appeared to her as having committed the new crime of belying himself by his exterior. Gilbert, a man of the people, of obscure and unknown birth! — Gilbert, the peasant, the clown, and the serf! — Gilbert was guilty, in the eyes of the queen, of having usurped the external appearance of a gentleman and a man of honour. The proud Austrian, the sworn enemy of lying and deception in others, became indignant, and immediately conceived a violent hatred for the unfortunate atom whom so many different motives combined to induce her to abhor.

For those who were intimate with her nature, for those who were accustomed to read in her eyes either serenity of temper or indications of an approaching storm, it was easy to discern that a tempest, full of thunder-claps and flashes of lightning, was raging in the depths of her heart.

But how was it possible for a human being, even a woman, to follow, in the midst of this hurricane of passions and anger, the succession of strange and contrasting feelings which clashed together in the queen's brain, and filled her breast with all the mortal poisons described by Homer!

The queen, with a single look, dismissed all her attendants, even Madame de Misery.

They immediately left the room.

The queen waited till the door had been closed on the last person. Then, casting her eyes upon Gilbert, she perceived that he had not ceased to gaze at her.

So much audacity offended her. The doctor's look was apparently inoffensive; but as it was continual, and seemed full of design, it weighed heavily upon her.

Marie Antoinette felt compelled to repress its importunity.

"Well, then, monsieur," said she, with the abruptness of a pistol-shot, "what are you doing there, standing before me, and gazing at me, instead of telling me with what complaint I am suffering?"

This furious apostrophe, rendered more forcible by the flashing of her eyes, would have annihilated any of the queen's courtiers, — it would even have compelled a marshal of France, a hero, or a demigod, to fall on his knees before her.

But Gilbert tranquilly replied, —

"It is by means of the eyes, madame, that the physician must first examine his patient. By looking at your Majesty, who sent for me, I do not satisfy an idle curiosity; I exercise my profession; I obey your orders."

"Then you must have studied me sufficiently."

"As much as lay in my power, madame."

"Am I ill?"

"Not in the strict sense of the word. But your Majesty is suffering from great over-excitement."

"Ah! ah!" said Marie Antoinette, ironically, "why do you not say at once that I am in a passion?"

"Let your Majesty allow me, since you have ordered the attendance of a physician, to express myself in medical terms."

"Be it so. But what is the cause of my over-excitement?"

"Your Majesty has too much knowledge not to be aware that the physician discovers the sufferings of the body, thanks to his experience and the traditions of his studies;

but he is not a sorcerer, who can discover at first sight the depths of the human soul."

"By this you mean to imply that the second or third time you could tell me, not only from what I am suffering, but also what are my thoughts?"

"Perhaps so, madame," coldly replied Gilbert.

The queen appeared to tremble with anger; her words seemed to be hanging on her lips, ready to burst forth in burning torrents.

She however restrained herself.

"I must believe you," said she, "you who are a learned man."

And she emphasised these last words with so much contempt, that the eye of Gilbert appeared to kindle in its turn with the fire of anger.

But a struggle of a few seconds' duration sufficed to this man to give him a complete victory.

Accordingly, with a calm brow, and unembarrassed expression, he almost immediately rejoined, —

"It is too kind of your Majesty to give me the title of a learned man, without having received any proofs of my knowledge."

The queen bit her lip.

"You must understand that I do not know if you are a scientific man," she replied; "but I have heard it said, and I repeat what everybody says."

"Well, then," said Gilbert, respectfully, and bowing still lower than he had done hitherto, "a superior mind, like that of your Majesty, must not blindly repeat what is said by the vulgar."

"Do you mean the people?" said the queen, insolently.

"The vulgar, madame," repeated Gilbert, with a firmness which made the blood thrill in the queen's veins, and gave rise to emotions which were as painful to her as they had hitherto been unknown.

"In fine," answered she, "let us not discuss that point. You are said to be learned, that is all that is essential. Where have you studied?"

"Everywhere, madame."

"That is not an answer."

"Nowhere, then."

"I prefer that answer. Have you studied nowhere?"

"As it may please you, madame," replied the doctor, bowing, "and yet it is less exact than to say everywhere."

"Come, answer me, then!" exclaimed the queen, becoming exasperated; "and above all, for Heaven's sake, Monsieur Gilbert, spare me such phrases."

Then, as if speaking to herself, —

"Everywhere! everywhere! What does that mean? It is the language of a charlatan, a quack, of a physician who practises in the public squares. Do you mean to overawe me by your sonorous syllables?"

She stepped forward, with ardent eyes and quivering lips.

"Everywhere! Mention some place; come, explain your meaning, Monsieur Gilbert."

"I said everywhere," answered Gilbert, coldly, "because in fact I have studied everywhere, madame; in the hut and in the palace, in cities and in the desert, upon our own species and upon animals, upon myself and upon others, in a manner suitable to one who loves knowledge, and studies it where it is to be found, — that is to say, everywhere."

The queen, overcome, cast a terrible glance at Gilbert, while he, on his part, was eying her with terrible perseverance. She became convulsively agitated, and, turning round, upset a small stand, upon which her chocolate had been served up in a cup of Sèvres porcelain. Gilbert saw the table fall, saw the broken cup, but did not move a finger.

The colour mounted to the cheeks of Marie Antoinette; she raised her cold, moist hand to her burning temples, but did not dare to raise her eyes again to look at Gilbert.

But her features assumed a more contemptuous, more insolent expression than before.

"Then, under what great master did you study?" continued the queen, again taking up the conversation at the point where she had left it off.

"I hardly know how to answer your Majesty, without running the risk of again wounding your Majesty."

The queen perceived the advantage that Gilbert had given her, and threw herself upon it like a lioness upon her prey.

"Wound me! you wound me! you!" exclaimed she. "Oh, monsieur! what are you saying there? You wound a queen! You are mistaken, monsieur, I can affirm to you. Ah, Doctor Gilbert, you have not studied the French language in as good schools as you have studied medicine. People of my station are not to be wounded, Doctor Gilbert. You may weary them; that is all."

Gilbert bowed, and made a step towards the door; but it was not possible for the queen to discover in his countenance the least show of anger, the least sign of impatience.

The queen, on the contrary, was stamping her feet with rage; she sprang towards Gilbert, as if to prevent him from leaving the room.

He understood her.

"Pardon me, madame," said he. "It is true I committed the unpardonable error to forget that, as a physician, I was called to see a patient. Forgive me, madame; hereafter I shall remember it." And he came back.

"Your Majesty," continued he, "is rapidly approaching a nervous crisis. I will venture to ask you not to give way to it; for in a short time it would be beyond your power to control it. At this moment your pulse must be imperceptible, the blood is rushing to the heart. Your Majesty is suffering, your Majesty is almost suffocating, and perhaps it would be prudent for you to summon one of your ladies in waiting."

The queen took a turn round the room, and, seating herself,—

"Is your name Gilbert?" asked she.

"Yes, Gilbert, madame."

"Strange! I remember an incident of my youth, the strange nature of which would doubtless *wound* you much, were I to relate it to you. But it matters not: for, if hurt, you will soon cure yourself,—you, who are no less a philosopher than a learned physician."

And the queen smiled ironically.

"Precisely so, madame," said Gilbert; "you may smile, and, little by little, subdue your nervousness by irony. It is one of the most beautiful prerogatives of the intelligent will to be able thus to control itself. Subdue it, madame, subdue it; but, however, without making a too violent effort."

This prescription of the physician was given with so much suavity, and such natural good humour, that the queen, while feeling the bitter irony contained in his words, could not take offence at what Gilbert had said to her.

She merely returned to the charge, recommencing her attacks where she had discontinued them.

"This incident of which I spoke," continued she, "is the following."

Gilbert bowed, as a sign that he was listening.

The queen made an effort, and fixed her gaze upon him.

"I was the dauphiness at that time, and I inhabited Trianon. There was in the gardens a little dark-looking, dirty boy, covered with mud,—a crabbed boy, a sort of sour Jean Jacques,—who weeded, dug, and picked off the caterpillars with his little crooked fingers. His name was Gilbert."

"It was myself, madame," said Gilbert, phlegmatically.

"You!" said Marie Antoinette, with an expression of hatred. "I was, then, right! but you are not, then, a learned man?"

"I think that, as your Majesty's memory is so good, you must also remember dates," rejoined Gilbert. "It was in 1772, if I am not mistaken, that the little gardener's boy,

of whom your Majesty speaks, weeded the flower-beds of Trianon to earn his bread. We are now in 1789. It is therefore seventeen years, madame, since the events to which you allude took place. It is more time than is necessary to metamorphose a savage into a learned man; the soul and the mind operate quickly in certain positions, like plants and flowers, which grow rapidly in hothouses. Revolutions, madame, are the hotbeds of the mind. Your Majesty looks at me, and, notwithstanding the perspicacity of your scrutiny, you do not perceive that the boy of sixteen has become a man of thirty-three; you are therefore wrong to wonder that the ignorant, the ingenuous little Gilbert, should, after having witnessed these revolutions, have become a learned man and a philosopher."

"Ignorant! be it so; but ingenuous,—ingenuous did you say?" furiously cried the queen. "I think you called that little Gilbert ingenuous."

"If I am mistaken, madame, or if I praised this little boy for a quality which he did not possess, I do not know how your Majesty can have ascertained more correctly than myself that he had the opposite defect."

"Oh, that is quite another matter!" said the queen, gloomily; "perhaps we shall speak of that some other time; but in the mean time let me speak of the learned man, of the man brought to perfection, of the perfect man I see before me."

Gilbert did not take up the word *perfect*; he understood but too well that it was a new insult.

"Let us return to our subject, madame," replied Gilbert. "Tell me for what purpose did your Majesty order me to come to your apartment."

"You propose to become the king's physician," said she. "Now you must understand, monsieur, that I attach too much importance to the health of my husband to trust it in the hands of a man whom I do not know perfectly."

"I offered myself to the king, madame," said Gilbert, "and I was accepted without your Majesty having any just

cause to conceive the least suspicion as to my capacity or want of zeal. I am, above all, a political physician, madame, recommended by Monsieur Necker. As for the rest, if the king is ever in want of my science, I shall prove myself a good physical doctor, so far as human science can be of use to the Creator's works. But what I shall be to the king, more particularly, besides being a good adviser and a good physician, is a good friend."

"A good friend!" exclaimed the queen, with a fresh outburst of contempt. "You, monsieur, a friend of the king?"

"Certainly," responded Gilbert, quietly; "why not, madame?"

"Oh, yes! all in virtue of your secret power, by the assistance of your occult science," murmured she; "who can tell? We have already seen the Jacqueses and the Maillotins; perhaps we shall go back to the dark ages! You have resuscitated philters and charms. You will soon govern France by magic; you will be a Faust or a Nicolas Flamel!"

"I have no such pretensions, madame."

"And why have you not, monsieur? How many monsters more cruel than those of the gardens of Armida, more cruel than Cerberus himself, would you not put to sleep on the threshold of our hell?"

When she had pronounced the words, "would you not put to sleep," the queen cast a scrutinising look on the doctor.

This time Gilbert blushed, in spite of himself.

It was a source of indescribable joy to Marie Antoinette; she felt that this time the blow she had struck had inflicted a real wound.

"For you have the power of causing sleep; you, who have studied everything and everywhere, you doubtless have studied magnetic science with the magnetisers of our century, who make sleep a treacherous instrument, and who read their secrets in the sleep of others."

"In fact, madame, I have often, and for a long time, studied under the learned Cagliostro."

"Yes; he who practised and made his followers practise that moral theft of which I was just speaking; the same who, by the aid of that magic sleep which I call infamous, robbed some of their souls, and others of their bodies."

Gilbert again understood her meaning, but this time he turned pale, instead of reddening. The queen trembled with joy to the very depths of her heart.

"Ah, wretch!" murmured she to herself; "I have wounded you, and I can see the blood."

But the profoundest emotions were never visible for any length of time on the countenance of Gilbert. Approaching the queen, therefore, who, quite joyful on account of her victory, was imprudently looking at him, —

"Madame," said he, "your Majesty would be wrong to deny the learned men of whom you have been speaking the most beautiful appendage to their science, which is the power of throwing, not victims, but *subjects*, into a magnetic sleep; you would be wrong, in particular, to contest the right they have to follow up by all possible means a discovery of which the laws, once recognised and regulated, are perhaps intended to revolutionise the world."

And while approaching the queen, Gilbert had looked at her, in his turn, with that power of will to which the nervous Andrée had succumbed.

The queen felt a chill run through her veins as he drew nearer to her.

"Infamy," said she, "be the reward of those men who make an abuse of certain dark and mysterious arts to ruin both the soul and body. May infamy rest upon the head of Cagliostro!"

"Ah!" replied Gilbert, with the accent of conviction, "beware, madame, of judging the faults committed by human beings with so much severity."

"Monsieur —"

"Every one is liable to err, madame. All human beings

commit injuries on their fellow creatures, and were it not for individual egotism, which is the foundation of general safety, the world would become but one great battle-field. Those are the best who are good, that is all. Others will tell you that those are best who are the least faulty. Indulgence must be the greater, madame, in proportion to the elevated rank of the judge. Seated as you are on so exalted a throne, you have less right than any other person to be severe towards the faults of others. On your worldly throne, you should be supremely indulgent, like God, who upon his heavenly throne is supremely merciful."

"Monsieur," said the queen, "I view my rights in a different light from you, and especially my duties. I am on the throne to punish or reward."

"I do not think so, madame. In my opinion, on the contrary, you are seated on the throne — you, a woman and a queen — to conciliate and to forgive."

"I suppose you are not moralising, monsieur."

"You are right, madame, and I was only replying to your Majesty. This Cagliostro, for instance, madame, of whom you were speaking a few moments since, and whose science you were contesting, I remember — and this is a remembrance of something anterior to your recollections of Trianon — I remember that in the gardens of the Chateau de Taverney he had occasion to give the dauphiness of France a proof of his science — I know not what it was, madame — but you must recollect it well: for that proof made a profound impression upon her, even so much as to cause her to faint."

Gilbert was now striking blows in his turn; it is true that he was dealing them at random, but he was favoured by chance, and they hit the mark so truly that the queen became pale.

"Yes," said she, in a hoarse voice, "yes, he made me see, as in a dream, a hideous machine; but I know not that up to the present time such a machine has ever really existed."

"I know not what he made you see, madame," rejoined

Gilbert, who felt satisfied with the effect he had produced, "but I do know that it is impossible to dispute the appellation of learned to a man who wields such a power as that over his fellow creatures."

"His fellow creatures," murmured the queen disdainfully.

"Be it so, — I am mistaken," replied Gilbert; "and his power is so much the more wonderful, that it reduces to a level with himself, under the yoke of fear, the heads of monarchs and princes of the earth."

"Infamy! infamy! I say again, upon those who take advantage of the weakness or the credulity of others."

"Infamous! did you call infamous those who make use of science?"

"Their science is nothing but chimeras, lies, and cowardice."

"What mean you by that, madame?" asked Gilbert calmly.

"My meaning is, that this Cagliostro is a cowardly mountebank, and that his pretended magnetic sleep is a crime."

"A crime!"

"Yes, a crime," continued the queen; "for it is the result of some potion, some philter, some poison; and human justice, which I represent, will be able to discover the mystery, and punish the inventor."

"Madame, madame," rejoined Gilbert, with the same patience as before, "a little indulgence, I beg, for those who have erred."

"Ah! you confess their guilt, then?"

The queen was mistaken, and thought from the mild tone of Gilbert's voice that he was supplicating pardon for himself.

She was in error, and Gilbert did not allow the advantage she had thus given him to escape.

"What!" said he, dilating his flashing eyes, before the gaze of which Marie Antoinette was compelled to lower hers, as if suddenly dazzled by the rays of the sun.

The queen remained confounded for a moment, and then, making an effort to speak, —

“A queen can no more be questioned than she can be wounded,” said she. “Learn to know that also, you who have but so newly arrived at court. But you were speaking, it seems to me, of those who have erred, and you asked me to be indulgent towards them.”

“Alas! madame,” said Gilbert, “where is the human creature who is not liable to reproach? Is it he who has ensconced himself so closely within the deep shell of his conscience that the look of others cannot penetrate it? It is this which is often denominated virtue. Be indulgent, madame.”

“But according to this opinion, then,” replied the queen, imprudently, “there is no virtuous being in your estimation, monsieur, — you who are the pupil of those men whose prying eyes seek the truth, even in the deepest recesses of the human conscience.”

“It is true, madame.”

She laughed, and without seeking to conceal the contempt which her laughter expressed.

“Oh, pray! monsieur,” exclaimed she, “do remember that you are not now speaking on a public square, to idiots, to peasants, or to patriots.”

“I am aware to whom I am speaking, madame; of this you may be fully persuaded,” replied Gilbert.

“Show more respect then, monsieur, or more adroitness; consider your past life, search the depths of that conscience which men who have studied everywhere must possess in common with the rest of mankind, notwithstanding their genius and their wisdom; recall to your mind all that you may have conceived that was vile, hurtful, and criminal, all the cruelties, the deeds, the crimes even, you have committed. Do not interrupt me; and when you have summed up all your misdeeds, learned doctor, you will bow down your head, and become more humble. Do not approach the dwelling of kings with such insolent pride,

who, until there is a new order of things, were established by Heaven to penetrate the souls of criminals, to examine the folds of the human conscience, and to inflict chastisement upon the guilty, without pity and without appeal.

"That, monsieur," continued the queen, "is what you ought to do. You will be thought the better of on account of your repentance. Believe me, the best mode of healing a soul so diseased as yours would be to live in solitude far from the grandeurs which give men false ideas of their own worth. I would advise you, therefore, not to approach the court, and to abandon the idea of attending the king during sickness. You have a cure to accomplish, for which God will esteem you more than for any other, — the cure of yourself. Antiquity had a proverb which expressed the following maxim, monsieur: *Medice, cura teipsum.*"

Gilbert, instead of being irritated at this proposal, which the queen considered as the most disagreeable of conclusions, replied with gentleness, — "Madame, I have already done all that your Majesty advises."

"And what have you done, monsieur?"

"I have meditated."

"Upon yourself?"

"Yes, upon myself, madame."

"And in regard to your conscience?"

"Especially on the subject of my conscience, madame."

"Do you think, then, I am sufficiently well informed of what you saw in it?"

"I do not know what your Majesty means by those words, but I think I can discover their meaning, which is, how many times a man of my age must have offended God."

"Really, you speak of God?"

"Yes."

"You?"

"Why not?"

"A philosopher! Do philosophers believe in the existence of a God?"

"I speak of God, and I believe in him."

"And you are still determined not to withdraw from court?"

"No, madame, I remain."

"Monsieur Gilbert, take heed." And the queen's countenance assumed a threatening expression which it would be impossible to describe.

"Oh! I have reflected much upon the subject, madame, and my reflections have led me to know that I am not less worthy than another; every one has his faults. I learned this axiom, not by pondering over books, but by searching the consciences of others."

"You are universal and infallible, are you not?" said the queen, ironically.

"Alas! madame, if I am not universal, if I am not infallible, I am nevertheless very learned in human misery, well versed in the greatest sorrows of the mind. And this is so true, that I could tell, by merely seeing the livid circle round your wearied eyes, by merely seeing the line which extends from one eyebrow to the other, by merely seeing at the corners of your mouth a contraction which is called by the prosaic name of wrinkle, — I can tell you, madame, how many severe trials you have undergone, how many times your heart has palpitated with anguish, to how many secret dreams of joy your heart has abandoned itself, to discover its terror on awaking.

"I will tell you all that, madame, when you shall desire it; I will tell it you, for I am sure of not being contradicted. I will tell it you by merely fastening upon you a gaze which can read and wishes to read your mind; and when you have felt the power of that gaze, when you have felt the weight of this curiosity sounding to your inmost soul, like the sea that feels the weight of the lead that plunges into its depths, then you will understand that I am able to do much, madame, and that, if I pause awhile, you should be grateful to me for it, instead of provoking me on to war."

This language, supported by a terrible fixity of the will

of provocation, exercised by man upon the woman, this contempt for all etiquette in presence of the queen, produced an unspeakable effect upon Marie Antoinette.

She felt as if a mist were overshadowing her brow, and sending an icy chill through her ideas; she felt her hatred turning into fear, and, letting her hands fall heavily by her side, retreated a step to avoid the approach of the unknown danger.

"And now, madame," said Gilbert, who clearly perceived all that was passing in her mind, "do you understand that it would be very easy for me to discover that which you conceal from everybody, and that which you conceal even from yourself? Do you understand that it would be easy for me to stretch you on that chair, which your fingers are now instinctively seeking as a support?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the queen, who was terrified, for she felt an unknown chill invading even her heart.

"Were I but to utter to myself a word which I will not utter," continued Gilbert, "were I but to summon up my will, which I renounce, you would fall as if thunder-stricken into my power. You doubt what I am telling you, madame. Oh, do not doubt it; you might perhaps tempt me once, and if once you tempted me! But no, you do not doubt it, do you?"

The queen, almost on the point of falling, exhausted, oppressed, and completely lost, grasped the back of her arm-chair with all the energy of despair and the rage of useless resistance.

"Oh!" continued Gilbert, "mark this well, madame: it is, that if I were not the most respectful, the most devoted, the most humble of your subjects, I should convince you by a terrible experiment. Oh! you need fear nothing. I prostrate myself humbly before the woman rather than before the queen. I tremble at the idea of entertaining any project which might, even in the slightest way, inquire into your thoughts. I would rather kill myself than disturb your soul."

"Monsieur! monsieur!" exclaimed the queen, striking the air with her arms as if to repel Gilbert, who was standing more than three paces from her.

"And still," continued Gilbert, "you caused me to be thrown into the Bastille. You only regret that it is taken, because the people by taking it reopened its gates for me. There is hatred visible in your eyes towards a man against whom personally you can have no cause of reproach. And see, now I feel that, since I have lessened the influence by means of which I have controlled you, you are perhaps resuming your doubts with your returning respiration."

In fact, since Gilbert had ceased to control her with his eyes and gestures, Marie Antoinette had reassumed her threatening attitude; like the bird which, being freed from the suffocating influence of the air-pump, endeavours to regain its song and its power of wing.

"Ah! you still doubt; you are ironical; you despise my warnings. Well, then, do you wish me to tell you, madame, a terrible idea that has just crossed my mind? This is what I was on the point of doing. Madame, I was just about to compel you to reveal to me your most intimate troubles, your most hidden secrets. I thought of compelling you to write them down on the table which you touch at this moment; and afterwards, when you had awakened and come to your senses again, I should have convinced you by your own writing of the existence of that power which you seem to contest; and also how real is the forbearance, and, shall I say it? — yes, I will say it — the generosity of the man whom you have just insulted, whom you have insulted for a whole hour, without his having for a single instant given you either a reason or a pretext for so doing."

"Compel me to sleep! compel me to speak in my sleep! Me! me!" exclaimed the queen, turning quite pale. "Would you have dared to do it, monsieur? But do you know what that is? Do you know the grave nature of

the threat you make? Why, it is the crime of high treason, monsieur. Consider it well. It is a crime which, after awakening from my sleep, I should have punished with death."

"Madame," said Gilbert, watching the feverish emotions of the queen, "be not so hasty in accusing, and especially in threatening. Certainly I should have possessed myself of all your secrets; but be convinced that it would not have been on an occasion like this; it would not have been during an interview between the queen and her subject, between a woman and a stranger. No; I should have put the queen to sleep, it is true, — and nothing would have been easier; but I should not have ventured to put her to sleep; I should not have allowed myself to speak to her without having a witness."

"A witness?"

"Yes, madame, — a witness who would faithfully note all your words, all your gestures, all the details, in short, of the scene which I should have brought about, in order that after its termination you could not doubt for a single moment longer."

"A witness, monsieur!" repeated the queen, terrified; "and who would that witness have been? But consider it maturely, monsieur; your crime would then have been doubled, for in that case you would have had an accomplice."

"And if this accomplice, madame, had been none other than the king?" said Gilbert.

"The king!" exclaimed Marie Antoinette, with an expression of fear that betrayed the wife more energetically than the confession of the somnambulist could have done. "Oh, Monsieur Gilbert! Monsieur Gilbert!"

"The king," continued Gilbert, calmly, — "the king is your husband, your supporter, your natural defender. The king would have related to you when you were awakened from your slumber how respectful and proud I was in being able to prove my science to the most revered of sovereigns."

And after having spoken these words, Gilbert allowed the queen sufficient time to meditate upon their importance.

The queen remained silent for several minutes, during which nothing was heard but the noise of her agitated breathing.

"Monsieur," replied she, after this pause, "from all that you have now told me, you must be a mortal enemy —"

"Or a devoted friend, madame?"

"It is impossible, monsieur: friendship cannot exist in unison with fear or mistrust."

"The friendship, madame, that exists between a subject and a queen cannot subsist except by the confidence which the subject may inspire her with. You will already have said to yourself that he is not an enemy whom, after the first word, we can deprive of the means of doing harm, especially when he is the first to denounce the use of his weapons."

"May I believe, monsieur, what you have been saying?" said the queen, looking thoughtfully at Gilbert.

"Why should you not believe me, madame, when you have every proof of my sincerity?"

"Men change, monsieur, — men change."

"Madame, I have made the same vow that certain illustrious warriors made before starting on an expedition, as to the use of certain weapons in which they were skilled. I shall never make use of my advantages but to repel the wrong that others may attempt to do me. *Not for offence, but for defence.* That is my motto."

"Alas!" said the queen, feeling humbled.

"I understand you, madame. You suffer because you see your soul in the hands of a physician, — you who rebelled at times against the idea of abandoning the care of your body to him. Take courage; be confident. He wishes to advise you well who has this day given you proof of such forbearance as that you have received from me. I desire to love you, madame; I desire that you should be beloved by all. The ideas I have already submitted to the king I will discuss with you."

"Doctor, take care!" exclaimed the queen, gravely. "You caught me in your snare: after having terrified the woman, you think to control the queen."

"No, madame," answered Gilbert, "I am not a contemptible speculator. I have ideas of my own; and I can conceive that you have yours. I must from this very moment repel this accusation—one that you would forever make against me—that I had intimidated you in order to subjugate your reason. I will say more, that you are the first woman in whom I have found united all the passions of a woman and all the commanding qualities of a man. You may be at the same time a woman and a friend. All humanity might be concentrated in you, were it necessary. I admire you, and I will serve you. I will serve you without any remuneration from you, merely for the sake of studying you, madame. I will do still more for your service. In case I should seem to be a too inconvenient piece of palace furniture, or if the impression made by the scene of to-day should not be effaced from your memory, I shall ask you, I shall pray you to dismiss me."

"Dismiss you!" exclaimed the queen, with a joyful air that did not escape Gilbert.

"Well, then, it is agreed, madame," replied he, with admirable presence of mind. "I shall not even tell the king what I had intended, and I shall depart. Must I go to a great distance to reassure you, madame?"

She looked at him, and appeared surprised at so much self-denial.

"I perceive," said he, "what your Majesty thinks. Your Majesty, who is better acquainted than is generally thought with the mysteries of the magnetic influence which so much alarmed you a few minutes since,—your Majesty says to herself, that at a distance from her I shall be no less dangerous and troublesome."

"How is that?" exclaimed the queen.

"Yes, I repeat it, madame. He who would be hurtful to any one by the means you have reproached my masters and

myself for employing could practise his hurtful power equally well were the distance a hundred leagues, as at three paces. Fear nothing, madame. I shall not attempt it."

The queen remained thoughtful for a moment, not knowing how to answer this extraordinary man, who made her waver even after she had formed the firmest resolutions.

On a sudden, the noise of steps heard from the end of the gallery made Marie Antoinette raise her head.

"The king," said she, "the king is coming."

"In that case, madame, answer me, I pray you, shall I remain here, or shall I leave you?"

"But —"

"Make haste, madame. I can avoid seeing the king, if you desire it. Your Majesty may show me a door by which I can withdraw."

"Remain!" said the queen to him.

Gilbert bowed courteously; while Marie Antoinette endeavoured to read in his features to what extent triumph would reveal more than either anger or anxiety.

Gilbert remained perfectly impassible.

"At least," said the queen to herself, "he ought to have manifested some slight satisfaction."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE COUNCIL.

THE king entered the room quickly and heavily, as was his custom. He had a busy, inquisitive air, that contrasted strangely with the icy rigidity of the queen's demeanour.

The fresh complexion of the king had not abandoned him. Having risen early, and feeling quite proud of the sound health he enjoyed by inhaling the morning air, he was breathing noisily, and stepped out vigorously on the floor.

"The doctor," said he, — "what has become of the doctor?"

"Good morning, sire. How do you do this morning? Do you feel much fatigued?"

"I have slept six hours: that is my allowance. I am very well. My mind is clear. You look rather pale, madame. I was told that you had sent for the doctor."

"Here is Doctor Gilbert," said the queen, stepping from before the recess of a window, in which the doctor had concealed himself till that moment.

The king's brow at once cleared up. Then, —

"Ah! I forgot," said he. "You sent for the doctor. Have you been unwell?"

The queen blushed.

"You blush!" exclaimed Louis XVI.

She turned crimson.

"Another secret," said the king.

"What secret, sire?" exclaimed the queen haughtily.

"You do not understand me. I tell you that you, who have your own favourite physicians, — you would not have sent for Doctor Gilbert, unless you felt the desire, which I know —"

"What desire?"

"You always have to conceal your sufferings from me."

"Ah!" exclaimed the queen, regaining courage.

"Yes," continued Louis XVI., "but take good care. Monsieur Gilbert is one of my confidential friends; and if you tell him anything he will be sure to tell it me."

Gilbert smiled.

"As for that, no, sire," said he.

"Well, then, the queen is corrupting my people."

Marie Antoinette gave one of those little stifled laughs which imply merely a wish to interrupt a conversation, or that the conversation is very tedious.

Gilbert understood her, but the king did not.

"Let us see, doctor," said he, "as it seems to amuse the queen, tell me what she has been saying to you."

"I was asking the doctor," said Marie Antoinette, in her turn, "why you had sent for him so early. I must, indeed, confess that his presence at Versailles at so unusual an hour perplexes me and makes me uneasy."

"I was waiting for the doctor," replied the king, looking gloomy, "to speak on politics with him."

"Ah! very well," said the queen.

And she seated herself as if to listen.

"Come, doctor," rejoined the king, taking a step towards the door.

Gilbert made a profound bow to the queen, and was about to follow Louis XVI.

"Where are you going?" exclaimed the queen. "What! are you going to leave me?"

"We are not going to talk on gay subjects, madame. It would be as well for us to spare you so much care."

"Do you call my sorrow care?" exclaimed the queen, majestically.

"A still better reason for doing so, my dear."

"Remain here; I wish it" said she. "Monsieur Gilbert, I imagine you will not disobey me."

"Monsieur Gilbert! Monsieur Gilbert!" exclaimed the king, much vexed.

"Well, then, what is the matter?"

"Why, Monsieur Gilbert, who was to give me some advice, who was to talk freely to me according to his conscience, Monsieur Gilbert will now no longer do so."

"And why not?" exclaimed the queen.

"Because you will be present, madame."

Gilbert made a sort of gesture, to which the queen immediately attributed some important meaning.

"In what manner," said she, to second it, "will Monsieur Gilbert risk displeasing me, if he speaks according to his conscience?"

"It is easily understood, madame," said the king. "You have a political system of your own. It is not always ours; so that —"

"So that Monsieur Gilbert, you clearly say, differs essentially from me in my line of politics."

"That must be the case, madame," replied Gilbert, "judging from the ideas which your Majesty knows me to entertain. Only your Majesty may rest assured that I shall tell the truth as freely in your presence as to the king alone."

"Ah! that is already something," exclaimed Marie Antoinette.

"The truth is not always agreeable," hastily murmured Louis XVI.

"But if it is useful?" observed Gilbert.

"Or even uttered with good intention," added the queen.

"In that view of the case, I agree with you," interposed Louis XVI. "But, if you were wise, madame, you would leave the doctor entire freedom of speech, — and which I need —"

"Sire," replied Gilbert, "since the queen herself calls for the truth, and as I know her Majesty's mind is sufficiently noble and powerful not to fear it, I prefer to speak in presence of both my sovereigns."

"Sire," said the queen, "I request it."

"I have full faith in your Majesty's good sense," said

Gilbert, bowing to the queen. "The subject is the happiness and glory of his Majesty the king."

"You are right to put faith in me," said the queen. "Begin, monsieur."

"All this is very well," continued the king, who was growing obstinate, according to his custom; "but, in short, the question is a delicate one; and I know well that, as to myself, you will greatly embarrass me by being present."

The queen could not withhold a gesture of impatience. She rose, then seated herself again, and darted a penetrating and cold look at the doctor, as if to divine his thoughts.

Louis XVI., seeing that there was no longer any means of escaping the ordinary and extraordinary inquisitorial race, seated himself in his arm-chair, opposite Gilbert, and heaved a deep sigh.

"What is the point in question?" asked the queen, as soon as this singular species of council had been thus constituted and installed.

Gilbert looked at the king once more, as if to ask him for his authority to speak openly.

"Speak! good Heaven! go on, monsieur, since the queen desires it."

"Well, then, madame," said the doctor, "I will inform your Majesty in a few words of the object of my early visit to Versailles. I came to advise his Majesty to proceed to Paris."

Had a spark fallen among the eight thousand pounds of gunpowder at the Hôtel de Ville, it could not have produced the explosion which those words caused in the queen's heart.

"The king proceed to Paris! The king!—ah!"—and she uttered a cry of horror that made Louis XVI. tremble.

"There!" exclaimed the king, looking at Gilbert, "what did I tell you, doctor?"

"The king!" continued the queen,—"the king in the midst of a revolted city!—the king amidst pitchforks and

scythes!—the king among the men who massacred the Swiss, and who assassinated Monsieur de Launay and Monsieur de Flesselles!—the king crossing the square of the Hôtel de Ville, and treading in the blood of his defenders! You must be deprived of your senses, monsieur, to speak thus. Oh! I repeat it, you are mad!”

Gilbert lowered his eyes like a man who is restrained by feelings of respect; but he did not answer a single word.

The king, who felt agitated to the bottom of his soul, turned about in his seat like a man undergoing torture on the gridiron of the Inquisition.

“Is it possible,” continued the queen, “that such an idea should have found a place in an intelligent mind, — in a French heart? What, monsieur! Do you not, then, know that you are speaking to the successor of Saint-Louis, — to the great-grandson of Louis XIV.?”

The king was beating the carpet with his feet.

“I do not suppose, however,” continued the queen, “that you desire to deprive the king of the assistance of his guards and his army, or that you are seeking to draw him out of his palace, which is a fortress, to expose him alone and defenceless to the blows of his infuriated enemies; you do not wish to see the king assassinated, I suppose, Monsieur Gilbert?”

“If I thought that your Majesty for a single moment entertained an idea that I am capable of such treachery, I should not be merely a madman, but should look upon myself as a wretch. But, Heaven be thanked! madame, you do not believe it any more than I do. No; I came to give my king this counsel, because I think the counsel good, and even superior to any other.”

The queen clinched her hand upon her breast with so much violence as to make the cambric crack beneath its pressure.

The king shrugged up his shoulders, with a slight movement of impatience.

“But, for Heaven’s sake,” cried he, “listen to him,

madame; there will be time enough to say no when you have heard him."

"The king is right, madame," said Gilbert, "for you do not know what I have to tell your Majesties. You think yourself surrounded by an army which is firm, devoted to your cause, and ready to die for you; it is an error. Of the French regiments, one half are conspiring with the regenerators to carry out their revolutionary ideas."

"Monsieur," exclaimed the queen, "beware! You are insulting the army!"

"On the contrary, madame," said Gilbert, "I am its greatest eulogist. We may respect our queen and be devoted to the king, and still love our country, and devote ourselves to liberty."

The queen cast a flaming look, like a flash of lightning, at Gilbert.

"Monsieur," said she to him, "this language —"

"Yes, this language offends you, madame. I can readily understand that; for, according to all probability, your Majesty hears it now for the first time."

"We must, nevertheless, accustom ourselves to it," muttered Louis XVI., with the submissive good sense that constituted his chief strength.

"Never!" exclaimed Marie Antoinette, "never!"

"Let us see. Listen! listen! I think what the doctor says is full of reason."

The queen sat down, trembling with rage.

Gilbert continued,—

"I was going to say, madame, that I have seen Paris, ay, and that you have not even seen Versailles. Do you know what Paris wishes to do at this moment?"

"No," said the king, anxiously.

"Perhaps it does not wish to take the Bastile a second time," said the queen, contemptuously.

"Assuredly not, madame," continued Gilbert; "but Paris knows that there is another fortress between the people and their sovereign. Paris proposes to assemble the deputies

of the forty-eight districts of which it is composed, and send them to Versailles."

"Let them come! let them come!" exclaimed the queen, in a tone of ferocious joy. "Oh! they will be well received here!"

"Wait, madame," replied Gilbert, "and beware; these deputies will not come alone."

"And with whom will they come?"

"They will come supported by twenty thousand National Guards."

"National Guards!" said the queen; "what are they?"

"Ah! madame, do not speak lightly of that body; it will some day become a power, — it will bind and loose."

"Twenty thousand men!" exclaimed the king.

"Well, monsieur," replied the queen, in her turn, "you have here ten thousand men that are worth a hundred thousand rebels; call them, call them, I tell you. The twenty thousand wretches will here find their punishment, and the example needed by all this revolutionary slime, which I would sweep away, ay, in a week, were I but listened to for an hour."

Gilbert shook his head sorrowfully.

"Oh, madame," said he, "how you deceive yourself, or rather how you have been deceived! Alas! alas! Have you reflected on it, — a civil war provoked by a queen? One only has done this, and she carried with her to the tomb a terrible epithet: she was called 'the foreigner.'"

"Provoked by me, monsieur? How do you understand that? Was it I who fired upon the Bastille without provocation?"

"Ah! madame," cried the king, "instead of advocating violent measures, listen to reason."

"To weakness!"

"Come, now, Antoinette, listen to the doctor," said the king, austere. "The arrival of twenty thousand men is not a trifling matter, particularly if we should have to fire grape-shot upon them."

Then, turning towards Gilbert, —

“Go on, monsieur,” said he; “go on.”

“All these hatreds, which become more inveterate from estrangement — all these boastings, which become courage when opportunity is afforded for their realisation — all the confusion of a battle, of which the issue is uncertain — oh! spare the king, spare yourself, madame, the grief of witnessing them,” said the doctor; “you can perhaps by gentleness disperse the crowd which is advancing. The crowd wishes to come to the king. Let us forestall it; let the king go to the crowd; let him, though now surrounded by his army, give proof to-morrow of audacity and political genius. Those twenty thousand men of whom we are speaking might, perhaps, conquer the king and his army. Let the king go alone and conquer these twenty thousand men, madame; they are the people.”

The king could not refrain from giving a gesture of assent, which Marie Antoinette at once observed.

“Wretched man!” cried she to Gilbert; “but you do not then perceive the effect which the king’s presence in Paris would produce, under the conditions you require?”

“Speak, madame!”

“It would be saying, ‘I approve;’ it would be saying, ‘You did right to kill my Swiss;’ it would be saying, ‘You have acted rightly in murdering my officers, in setting fire to and making my capital stream with blood; you have done rightly in dethroning me. I thank you, gentlemen, I thank you!’”

And a disdainful smile rose to the lips of Marie Antoinette.

“No, madame, your Majesty is mistaken.”

“Monsieur!”

“It would be saying, ‘There has been some justice in the grief of the people. I am come to pardon. It is I who am the chief of the nation, and the king; it is I who am at the head of the French Revolution, as in former days Henri III. placed himself at the head of the League.

Your generals are my officers; your National Guards my soldiers; your magistrates my men of business. Instead of urging me onward, follow me, if you are able to do so. The greatness of my stride will prove to you once more that I am the King of France, the successor of Charlemagne.' ”

“He is right,” said the king, in a sorrowful tone.

“Oh!” exclaimed the queen, “for mercy’s sake listen not to this man! — this man is your enemy.”

“Madame,” said Gilbert, “his Majesty himself is about to tell you what he thinks of the words I have spoken.”

“I think, monsieur, that you are the first who up to this moment has dared to speak the truth to me.”

“The truth!” cried the queen. “Gracious Heaven! what is it you are saying?”

“Yes, madame,” rejoined Gilbert; “and impress yourself fully with this fact, — that Truth is the only torch which can point out and save royalty from the dark abyss into which it is now being hurried.”

And while uttering these words, Gilbert bowed humbly, as low as even to the knees of Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DECISION.

For the first time, the queen appeared deeply moved. Was it from the reasoning, or from the humility, of the doctor?

Moreover, the king had risen from his seat with a determined air; he was thinking of the execution of Gilbert's project.

However, from the habit which he had acquired of doing nothing without consulting the queen, —

"Madame," said he to her, "do you approve it?"

"It appears it must be so," replied the queen.

"I do not ask you for any abnegation," said the king.

"What is it, then, you ask?"

"I ask you for the expression of a conviction which will strengthen mine."

"You ask of me a conviction?"

"Yes."

"Oh! if it be only that, I am convinced, monsieur."

"Of what?"

"That the moment has arrived which will render monarchy the most deplorable and the most degrading position which exists in the whole world."

"Oh!" said the king, "you exaggerate; deplorable, I will admit, but degrading, that is impossible."

"Sire, the kings, your forefathers, have bequeathed to you a very mournful inheritance," said the queen, sorrowfully.

"Yes," said Louis XVI., "an inheritance which I have the grief to make you share, madame."

"Be pleased to allow me, sire," said Gilbert, who truly compassionated the great misfortunes of his fallen sovereigns; "I do not believe that there is any reason for your Majesty to view the future in such terrific colours as you have depicted it. A despotic monarchy has ceased to exist, a constitutional empire commences."

"Ah! monsieur," said the king, "and am I a man capable of founding such an empire in France?"

"And why not, sire?" cried the queen, somewhat comforted by the last words of Gilbert.

"Madame," replied the king, "I am a man of good sense, and a learned man. I see clearly, instead of endeavouring to see confusedly into things, and I know precisely all that is not necessary for me to know to administer the government of this country. From the day on which I shall be precipitated from the height of the inviolability of an absolute prince, — from the day on which it shall be allowed to be discovered that I am a mere plain man, — I lose all the factitious strength which alone was necessary to govern France, since, to speak truly, Louis XIII., Louis XIV., and Louis XV. sustained themselves completely, thanks to this factitious strength. What do the French now require? A master. I feel that I am only capable of being a father. What do the revolutionists require? A sword. I do not feel that I have strength enough to strike."

"You do not feel that you have strength to strike!" exclaimed the queen, "to strike the people who are destroying the property of your children, and who would carry off even from your own brow, one after the other, every gem that adorns the crown of France?"

"What answer can I make to this?" calmly said Louis XVI.; "would you have me reply, No? By doing so I should raise up in your mind one of those storms which are the discomfort of my life. You know how to hate. Oh, so much the better for you! You know how

to be unjust, and I do not reproach you with it. It is a great quality in those who have to govern."

"Do you, perchance, consider me unjust towards the revolution? Now tell me that?"

"In good faith, yes."

"You say yes, sire? you say yes?"

"If you were the wife of a plain citizen, my dear Antoinette, you would not speak as you do."

"I am not one."

"And that is the reason for my excusing you, but that does not mean that I approve your course. No, madame, no, you must be resigned; we succeeded to the throne of France at a period of storm and tempest. We ought to have strength enough to push on before us that car armed with scythes, and which is called Revolution, but our strength is insufficient."

"So much the worse," said Marie Antoinette, "for it is over our children that it will be driven."

"Alas! that I know; but at all events we shall not urge it forward."

"We will make it retrograde, sire!"

"Oh!" cried Gilbert, with a prophetic accent, "beware, madame; in retrograding, it will crush you."

"Monsieur," said the queen, impatiently, "I observe that you carry the frankness of your counsels very far."

"I will be silent, madame."

"Oh, good Heaven! let him speak on," said the king; "what he has now announced to you, if he has not read it in twenty newspapers during the last eight days, it is because he has not chosen to read them. You should at least be thankful to him that he does not convey the truths he utters in a bitter spirit."

Marie Antoinette remained silent for a moment; then, with a deep drawn sigh,—

"I will sum up," she said, "or rather I will repeat my arguments. By going to Paris voluntarily, it will be sanctioning all that has been done there."

"Yes," replied the king, "I know that full well."

"Yes, it would be humiliating, — disowning your army, which is preparing to defend you."

"It is to spare the effusion of French blood," said the doctor.

"It is to declare that henceforward tumultuous risings and violence may oppose such a direction to the will of the king as may best suit the views of insurgents and traitors."

"Madame, I believe," said Gilbert, "that you had just now the goodness to acknowledge that I had had the good fortune to convince you."

"Yes, I just now did acknowledge it; one corner of the veil had been raised up before me. But now, monsieur, oh! now that I am again becoming blind, as you have termed it, and I prefer looking into my own mind to see reflected there those splendours to which education, tradition, and history have accustomed me, I prefer considering myself still a queen to feeling myself a bad mother to this people, who insult and hate me."

"Antoinette! Antoinette!" cried Louis XVI., terrified at the sudden paleness which pervaded the queen's face, and which was nothing more than the precursor of a terrible storm of anger.

"Oh, no, no, sire, I will speak," replied the queen.

"Beware, madame," said he.

And with a glance the king directed the attention of Marie Antoinette to the presence of the doctor.

"Oh, this gentleman knows all that I was about to say; he knows even everything I think," said the queen, with a bitter smile at the recollection of the scene which had just before occurred between her and the doctor. "And therefore why should I restrain myself? This gentleman, moreover, has been taken by us for our confidant, and I know not why I should have any fear of speaking. I know that you are carried, dragged away, like the unhappy prince in my dear old German ballads. Whither are you going? Of that I know nothing; but you are going whence you will never return."

"Why, no, madame; I am going simply and plainly to Paris," replied Louis XVI.

Marie Antoinette raised her shoulders.

"Do you believe me to be insane?" said she, in a voice of deep irritation. "You are going to Paris? 'T is well. Who tells you that Paris is not an abyss which I see not, but which I can divine? Who can say whether, in the tumultuous crowd by which you will necessarily be surrounded, you will not be killed? Who knows whence a chance shot may proceed? Who knows, amid a hundred thousand upraised and threatening hands, which it is that has directed the murderous knife?"

"Oh, on that head you need not have the slightest apprehension. They love me!" exclaimed the king.

"Oh, say not that, sire, or you will make me pity you. They love you, and they kill, they assassinate, they massacre those who represent you on the earth, — you, a king, — you, the image of God. Well, the governor of the Bastile was your representative; he was the image of the king. Be well assured of this, and I shall not be accused of exaggeration when I say it. If they have killed De Launay, that brave and faithful servant, they would have killed you, sire, had you been in his place, and much more easily than they killed him; for they know you, and know that, instead of defending yourself, you would have bared your breast to them."

"Conclude," said the king.

"But I thought that I had concluded, sire."

"They will kill me?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well!"

"And my children!" exclaimed the queen.

Gilbert thought it time that he should interfere.

"Madame," said he, "the king will be so much respected at Paris, and his presence will cause such transports, that, if I have a fear, it is not for the king, but for those fanatics who will throw themselves to be crushed beneath

his horse's feet, like the Indian Fakirs beneath the car of their idol."

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur!" cried Marie Antoinette.

"This march to Paris will be a triumph, madame."

"But, sire, you do not reply."

"It is because I agree somewhat with the doctor, madame."

"And you are impatient, are you not, to enjoy this great triumph?"

"And the king, in this case, would be right," said Gilbert, "for this impatience would be a further proof of the profoundly just discrimination with which his Majesty judges men and things. The more his Majesty shall hasten to accomplish this, the greater will his triumph be."

"Yes, you believe that, monsieur?"

"I am positive it will be so; for the king, by delaying it, would lose all the advantage to be derived from its spontaneousness. But reflect, madame, reflect that the initiative of this measure may proceed from another quarter, and such a request would change, in the eyes of the Parisians, the position of his Majesty, and would give him in some measure the appearance of acceding to an order."

"There, hear you that?" exclaimed the queen. "The doctor acknowledges it, — they would order you. Oh, sire, think of that!"

"The doctor does not say that they have ordered, madame."

"Patience! patience! only delay a little, sire, and the request, or rather the order, will arrive."

Gilbert slightly compressed his lips with a feeling of vexation, which the queen instantly caught, although it was almost as evanescent as the lightning.

"What have I said?" murmured she. "Poor simpleton! I have been arguing against myself."

"And in what, madame?" inquired the king.

"In this, — that by a delay I should make you lose the

advantage of your initiative; and, nevertheless, I have to ask for a delay."

"Ah, madame, ask everything, exact anything, excepting that."

"Antoinette," said the king, taking her hand, "you have sworn to ruin me."

"Oh, sire!" exclaimed the queen, in a tone of reproach, which revealed all the anguish of her heart. "And can you speak thus to me?"

"Why, then, do you attempt to delay this journey?" asked the king.

"Consider truly, madame, that under such circumstances the fitting moment is everything; reflect on the importance of the hours which are flying past us at such a period, when an enraged and furious people are counting them anxiously as they strike."

"Not to-day, Monsieur Gilbert. To-morrow, sire, oh, to-morrow! grant me till to-morrow, and I swear to you I will no longer oppose this journey."

"A day lost," murmured the king.

"Twenty-four long hours," said Gilbert; "reflect on that, madame."

"Sire, it must be so," rejoined the queen, in a supplicating tone.

"A reason, — a reason!" cried the king.

"None but my despair, sire, — none but my tears, — none but my entreaties."

"But between this and to-morrow what may happen? Who can tell this?" said the king, completely overcome by seeing the queen's despair.

"And what is there that could happen?" said the queen, at the same time looking at Gilbert with an air of entreaty.

"Oh," said Gilbert, "out yonder, nothing yet. A hope, were it even as vague as a cloud, would suffice to make them wait patiently till to-morrow; but —"

"But it is here, is it not?" said the king.

"Yes, sire, it is here that we have to apprehend."

"It is the Assembly?"

Gilbert gave an affirmative nod.

"The Assembly," continued the king, "with such men as Monsieur Monnier, Monsieur Mirabeau, and Monsieur Sieyès, is capable of sending me some address which would deprive me of all the advantage of my good intentions."

"Well, then," exclaimed the queen, with gloomy fury, "so much the better, because you would then refuse, — because then you would maintain your dignity as a king, — because then you would not go to Paris, and if we must here sustain a war, well, here will we sustain it, — because, if we must die, we will die here, but as illustrious and unshrinking monarchs, — which we are, — as kings, as masters, as Christians who put their trust in God, from whom we hold the crown."

On perceiving this feverish excitement of the queen, Louis XVI. saw that there was nothing to be done but to yield to it.

He made a sign to Gilbert, and, advancing to Marie Antoinette, whose hand he took, —

"Tranquillise yourself, madame," said he to her; "all shall be done as you desire. You know, my dear wife, that I would not do anything which would be displeasing to you, for I have the most unbounded affection for a woman of your merit, and, above all, of your virtue."

And Louis XVI. accentuated these last words with inexpressible nobleness; thus exalting with all his power the so much calumniated queen, and that in the presence of a witness capable, should it be requisite, of properly reporting all he had heard and seen.

This delicacy profoundly moved Marie Antoinette, who, grasping with both hands the hand which the king held out to her, said: —

"Well, then, only till to-morrow, sire, — no later; that shall be the last delay; but I ask you that as a favour on my knees. To-morrow, at the hour which may please you, I swear to you, you shall set out for Paris."

"Take care, madame, the doctor is a witness," said the king, smiling.

"Sire, you have never known me to forfeit my word," replied the queen.

"No, but there is only one thing I acknowledge."

"What is that?"

"It is, that I am anxious, resigned as you appear to be, to know why you have asked me for this delay of twenty-four hours. Do you expect some news from Paris, — some intelligence from Germany? Is there anything —"

"Do not question me, sire."

The king was as inquisitive as Figaro was lazy; anything that excited his curiosity delighted him.

"Is there any question as to the arrival of troops, — of a reinforcement, — of any political combination?"

"Sire, sire!" murmured the queen, in a reproachful tone.

"Is it a question of —"

"There is no question in the matter," replied the queen.

"Then it is a secret?"

"Well, then, yes! the secret of an anxious woman, that is all."

"A caprice, is it not?"

"Caprice, if you will."

"The supreme law."

"That is true. Why does it not exist in politics as in philosophy? Why are kings not permitted to make their political caprices supreme laws?"

"It will come to that, you may rest assured. As to myself, it is already done," said the king, in a jocular tone.

"Therefore, till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow," sorrowfully rejoined the queen.

"Do you keep the doctor with you?" asked the king.

"Oh, no, no!" cried the queen, with a sort of eagerness which made Gilbert smile.

"I will take him with me, then."

Gilbert bowed a third time to the Queen Marie Antoinette, who this time returned his salutation more as a woman than a queen.

Then, as the king was going towards the door, he followed the king.

"It appears to me," said the king, as they proceeded along the gallery, "that you are on good terms with the queen, Monsieur Gilbert."

"Sire," replied the doctor, "it is a favour for which I am indebted to your Majesty."

"Long live the king!" cried the courtiers, who already thronged the antechambers.

"Long live the king!" repeated a crowd of officers and foreign soldiers in the courtyard, who were eagerly hastening towards the palace doors.

These acclamations, which became louder as the crowd increased, gave greater delight to the heart of Louis XVI. than any he had ever before received, although he had so frequently been greeted in the same manner.

As to the queen, still seated where the king had left her, near the window, and where she had just passed such agonising moments, when she heard the cries of devotedness and love which welcomed the king as he passed by, and which gradually died away in the distance, under the porticos or beneath the thickets of the park, —

"Long live the king!" cried she; "yes, long live the king! The king will live, and that in despite of thee, infamous Paris! thou odious gulf, thou sanguinary abyss, thou shalt not swallow up this victim! I will drag him from thee, and that with this little, this weak arm. It threatens thee at this moment, — it devotes thee to the execration of the world, and to the vengeance of God!"

And, pronouncing these words with a violence of hatred which would have terrified the most furious friends of the Revolution, could they have seen and heard her, the queen stretched forth towards Paris her weak arm, which shone

from beneath the lace which surrounded it, like a sword starting from its scabbard.

Then she called Madame Campan, the lady in waiting in whom she placed the most confidence, and, shutting herself up with her in her cabinet, ordered that no one should be admitted to her presence.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BREASTPLATE.

THE following morning the sun rose brilliant and pure as on the preceding day. Its bright rays gilded the marble and the gravel walks of Versailles. The birds, grouped in thousands on the first trees of the park, saluted with their deafening songs the new and balmy day of joy thus promised to their love.

The queen had risen at five o'clock. She had given orders that the king should be requested to go to her apartment as soon as he should wake.

Louis XVI., somewhat fatigued from having received a deputation of the Assembly, which had come to the palace the preceding evening, and to which he had been obliged to reply, — this was the commencement of speech-making, — Louis XVI. had slept somewhat later than usual to recover from his fatigue, and that it might not be said that he was not as vigorous as ever.

Therefore he was scarcely dressed when the queen's message was delivered to him; he was at that moment putting on his sword. He slightly knit his brow.

"What!" said he, "is the queen already up?"

"Oh, a long time ago, sire."

"Is she again ill?"

"No, sire."

"And what can the queen want so early in the morning?"

"Her Majesty did not say."

The king took his first breakfast, which consisted of a bowl of soup and a little wine, and then went to the queen's apartment.

He found the queen full dressed, as for a ceremonious reception, — beautiful, pale, imposing. She welcomed her husband with that cold smile which shone like a winter's sun upon the cheeks of the queen, as when in the grand receptions at court it was necessary she should cast some rays upon the crowd.

The king could not comprehend the sorrow which pervaded that smile and look. He was already preparing himself for one thing, that is to say, the resistance of Marie Antoinette to the project which had been proposed the day before.

"Again some new caprice," thought he.

And this was the reason for his frowning. The queen did not fail, by the first words she uttered, to strengthen this opinion.

"Sire," said she, "since yesterday I have been reflecting much."

"There now, — now it is coming," cried the king.

"Dismiss, if you please, all who are not our intimate friends," said the queen.

The king, though much annoyed, ordered his officers to leave the room. One only of the queen's women remained; it was Madame Campan.

Then the queen, laying both her beautiful hands on the king's arm, said to him, —

"Why are you dressed already? That is wrong."

"How wrong? and why?"

"Did I not send word to you not to dress yourself until you had been here? I see you have already your coat on and your sword. I had hoped you would have come in your dressing-gown."

The king looked at her, much surprised. This fantasy of the queen awakened in his mind a crowd of strange ideas, the novelty of which only rendered the improbability still stronger. His first gesture was one of mistrust and uneasiness.

"What is it that you wish?" said he. "Do you intend

to retard or prevent that which we had yesterday agreed upon ? ”

“ In no way, sire.”

“ Let me entreat you not to jest on a matter of so serious a nature. I ought and I will go to Paris. I can no longer avoid it. My household troops are prepared. The persons who are to accompany me were summoned last night to be ready.”

“ Sire, I have no intentions of that nature, but — ”

“ Reflect,” said the king, working himself up by degrees to gain courage, — “ reflect that the intelligence of my intended journey must have already reached the Parisians, — that they have prepared themselves, — that they are expecting me, — that the very favourable feelings, as was predicted to us, that this journey has excited in the public mind may be changed into dangerous hostility. Reflect, in fine — ”

“ But, sire, I do not at all contest what you have done me the honour to say to me. I resigned myself to it yesterday ; this morning I am still resigned.”

“ Then, madame, why all this preamble ? ”

“ I do not make any.”

“ Pardon me ! then why all these questions regarding my dress, my projects ? ”

“ As to your dress, that I admit,” said the queen, endeavouring again to smile ; but that smile, from so frequently fading away, became more and more funereal.

“ What observation have you to make upon my dress ? ”

“ I wish, sire, that you would take off your coat.”

“ Do you not think it becoming ? It is a silk coat, of a violet colour. The Parisians are accustomed to see me dressed thus ; they like to see me in this, with which, moreover, the blue riband harmonises well. You have often told me so yourself.”

“ I have, sire, no objection to offer to the colour of your coat.”

“ Well, then ? ”

"But to the lining."

"In truth, you puzzle me with that eternal smile. The lining, — what jest—"

"Alas! I no longer jest."

"There! now you are feeling my waistcoat; does that displease you too? White taffeta and silver, the embroidery worked by your own hand, — it is one of my favourite waistcoats."

"I have nothing to say against the waistcoat either."

"How singular you are! Is it, then, the frill or the embroidered cambric shirt that offends you? Why must I not appear in full dress when I am going to visit my good city of Paris?"

A bitter smile contracted the queen's lips, — the nether lip particularly, that which the Austrian was so much reproached for; it became thicker, and advanced as if it were swelled by all the venom of hatred and of anger.

"No," said she, "I do not reproach you for being so well dressed, sire; but it is the lining, — the lining I say again and again."

"The lining of my embroidered shirt! Ah! will you at least explain yourself?"

"Well, then, I will explain. The king, hated, considered an encumbrance, who is about to throw himself into the midst of seven hundred thousand Parisians inebriated with their triumph and their revolutionary ideas, the king is not a prince of the Middle Ages, and yet he ought to make his entry this day into Paris in a good iron cuirass, in a helmet of good Milan steel; he should protect himself in such a way that no ball, no arrow, no stone, no knife, could reach his person."

"That is in fact true," said Louis XVI. pensively; "but, my good friend, as I do not call myself either Charles VIII., or Francis I., or even Henri IV., as the monarchy of my day is one of velvet and of silk, I shall go naked under my silken coat, or, to speak more correctly, I shall go with a good mark at which they may aim their

balls, for I wear the jewel of my orders just over my heart."

The queen uttered a stifled groan.

"Sire," said she, "we begin to understand each other. You shall see, you shall see that your wife jests no longer."

She made a sign to Madame Campan, who had remained at the farther end of the room, and the latter took from a drawer of the queen's chiffonnier, a wide oblong flat parcel, wrapped up in a silken cover.

"Sire," said the queen, "the heart of the king belongs, in the first place, to France, that is true; but I fully believe that it belongs to his wife and children. For my part, I will not consent that this heart should be exposed to the balls of the enemy. I have adopted measures to save from every danger my husband, my king, the father of my children."

While saying this, she unfolded the silk which covered it, and displayed a waistcoat of fine steel mail, crossed with such marvellous art that it might have been thought an Arabian watered stuff, so supple and elastic was its tissue, so admirable the play of its whole surface.

"What is that?" said the king.

"Look at it, sire."

"A waistcoat, it appears to me."

"Why, yes, sire."

"A waistcoat that closes up to the neck."

"With a small collar, intended, as you see, to line the collar of the waistcoat or the cravat."

The king took the waistcoat in his hands and examined it very minutely.

The queen, on observing this eagerness, was perfectly transported.

The king, on his part, appeared delighted, counting the rings of this fairy net which undulated beneath his fingers with all the malleability of knitted wool.

"Why," exclaimed he, "this is admirable steel!"

"Is it not, sire?"

"I really cannot imagine where you can have procured this."

"I bought it last night, sire, of a man who long since wished me to purchase it of him in the event of your going out on a campaign."

"It is admirable! admirable!" repeated the king, examining it as an artist.

"And it will fit you as well as a waistcoat made by your tailor, sire."

"Oh! do you believe that?"

"Try it on."

The king said not a word, but took off his violet-coloured coat. The queen trembled with joy; she assisted Louis XVI. in taking off his orders, and Madame Campan the rest. The king, however, unbuckled his sword and laid it on the table.

If any one at that moment had contemplated the face of the queen, they would have seen it lit up by one of those triumphant smiles which supreme felicity alone bestows.

The king allowed her to divest him of his cravat, and the delicate fingers of the queen placed the steel collar round his neck. Then Marie Antoinette herself fastened the hooks of his corselet, which adapted itself beautifully to the shape of the body, being lined throughout with a fine doe-skin, for the purpose of preventing any uncomfortable pressure from the steel.

This waistcoat was longer than an ordinary cuirass; it covered the whole body. With the waistcoat and shirt over it, it did not increase the volume of the body even half a line. It did not in the slightest degree inconvenience any movement of the wearer.

"Is it very heavy?" asked the queen.

"No."

"Only see, my king; it is a perfect wonder, is it not?" said the queen, clapping her hands, and turning to Madame Campan, who was just buttoning the king's ruffles.

Madame Campan manifested her joy in as artless a manner as did the queen.

"I have saved my king!" cried Marie Antoinette. "Test this invisible cuirass; prove it; place it upon a table; try if you can make any impression upon it with a knife; try if you can make a hole through it with a ball; try it, try it!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the king, with a doubting air.

"Only try it," repeated she, with enthusiasm.

"I would willingly do so from curiosity," replied the king.

"You need not do so; it would be superfluous, sire."

"How! it would be superfluous that I should prove to you the excellence of your wonder?"

"Ah! thus it is with all the men. Do you believe that I would have given faith to the judgment of another, — of an indifferent person, — when the life of my husband, the welfare of France, was in question?"

"And yet, Antoinette, it seems to me that this is precisely what you have done, — you have put faith in another."

She shook her head with a delightfully playful obstinacy.

"Ask her," said she, pointing to the woman who was present, "ask our good Campan there what we have done this morning."

"What was it, then? Good Heaven!" ejaculated the king, completely puzzled.

"This morning — what am I saying? — this night, after dismissing all the attendants, we went, like two mad-brained women, and shut ourselves up in her room, which is at the far end of the wing occupied by the pages. Now the pages were sent off last night to prepare the apartments at Rambouillet, and we felt well assured that no one could interrupt us before we had executed our project."

"Good Heaven! you really alarm me. What were the designs, then, of these two Judiths?"

"Judith effected less, and certainly with less noise. But for that the comparison would be marvellously appropriate; Campan carried the bag which contained this breastplate. as for me, I carried a long hunting-knife which belonged

to my father, that infallible blade which killed so many wild boars."

"Judith! still Judith!" cried the king, laughing.

"Oh! Judith had not the heavy pistol which I took from your armoury, and which I made Weber load for me."

"A pistol!"

"Undoubtedly. You ought to have seen us running in the dark, startled, agitated at the slightest noise, avoiding everybody for fear of their being indiscreet, creeping like two little mice along the deserted corridors. Campan locked three doors, and placed a mattress against the last, to prevent our being overheard; we put the cuirass on one of the figures which they use to stretch my gowns on, and placed it against a wall. And I—with a firm hand, too, I can assure you—struck the breastplate with the knife; the blade bent, flew out of my hand, and, bounding back, stuck into the floor, to our great terror."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the king.

"Wait a little."

"Did it not make a hole?" asked Louis XVI.

"Wait a little, I tell you. Campan pulled the knife out of the board. 'You are not strong enough, madame,' she said, 'and perhaps your hand trembles. I am stronger, as you shall see.' She therefore raised the knife, and gave the figure so violent a blow, so well applied, that my poor German knife snapped off short against the steel mail."

"See, here are the two pieces, sire. I will have a dagger made for you out of one of them."

"Oh, this is absolutely fabulous!" cried the king; "and the mail was not injured?"

"A slight scratch on the exterior ring, and there are three,—one over the other."

"I should like to see it."

"You shall see it."

And the queen began to undress the king again with wonderful celerity, in order that he might the sooner admire her idea, and her high feats in arms.

"Here is a place that is somewhat damaged, it would appear to me," said the king, pointing to a slight depression over a space of about an inch in circumference.

"That was done by the pistol ball, sire."

"How! you fired off a pistol loaded with ball?—you?"

"Here is the ball, completely flattened, and still black. Here, take it; and now do you believe that your life is in safety?"

"You are my tutelary angel," said the king, who began slowly to unhook the mailed waistcoat, in order to examine more minutely the traces left by the knife and the pistol shot.

"Judge of my terror, dear king," said Marie Antoinette, "when on the point of firing the pistol at the breastplate. Alas! the fear of the report, that horrible noise which you know has so frightful an effect upon me, was nothing; but it appeared to me that, in firing at the waistcoat destined to protect you, I was firing at you yourself. I was afraid of wounding you; I feared to see a hole in the mail, and then my efforts, my trouble, my hopes, were forever lost."

"My dear wife," said Louis XVI., having completely unhooked the coat of mail and placed it on the table, "what gratitude do I not owe you!"

"Well, now, what is it you are doing?" asked the queen.

And she took the waistcoat and again presented it to the king. But he, with a smile replete with nobleness and kindness, —

"No," said he, "I thank you."

"You refuse it?" said the queen.

"I refuse it."

"Oh! but reflect a moment, sire."

"Sire," cried Madame Campan, in a supplicating tone, "but 't is your salvation, — 't is your life!"

"That is possible," said the king.

"You refuse the succour which God himself has sent us?"

"Enough! enough!" said the king.

"Oh! you refuse! you refuse!"

"Yes, I refuse."

"But they will kill you."

"My dear Antoinette, when gentlemen in this eighteenth century are going out to battle, they wear a cloth coat, waistcoat, and shirt, — this is all they have to defend them against musket-balls; when they go upon the field of honour to fight a duel, they throw off all but their shirt, — that is for the sword. As to myself, I am the first gentleman of my kingdom; I will do neither more nor less than my friends; and there is more than this, — while they wear cloth, I alone have the right to wear silk. Thanks, my good wife; thanks, my good queen; thanks."

"Ah!" exclaimed the queen, at once despairing and delighted, "why cannot his army hear him speak thus?"

As to the king, he quietly completed his toilette, without even appearing to understand the act of heroism he had just performed.

"Is the monarchy, then, lost?" murmured the queen
"when we can feel so proudly at such a moment?"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DEPARTURE.

ON leaving the queen's apartment, the king immediately found himself surrounded by all the officers and all the persons of his household who had been appointed by him to attend him on his journey to Paris.

The principal personages were Messieurs de Beauvau, de Villeroy, de Nesle, and d'Estaing.

Gilbert was waiting, in the middle of the crowd, till Louis XVI. should perceive him, were it only to cast a look upon him in passing.

It could be easily perceived that the whole of the throng there present were still in doubt, and that they could not credit that the king would persist in following up the resolution he had come to.

"After breakfast, gentlemen," said the king, "we will set out."

Then, perceiving Gilbert, —

"Ah! you are there, doctor," he continued; "you know that I take you with me."

"At your orders, sire."

The king went into his cabinet, where he was engaged two hours. He afterwards attended mass with all his household; then, at about nine o'clock, he sat down to breakfast.

The repast was taken with the usual ceremonies, excepting that the queen, who, after attending mass, was observed to be out of spirits, her eyes swelled and red, had insisted on being present at the king's repast, but without

partaking of it in the slightest manner, that she might be with him to the last moment.

The queen had brought her two children with her, who, already much agitated, doubtless, by what the queen had said to them, were looking anxiously from time to time at their father's face, and then at the crowd of officers of the guards who were present.

The children, moreover, from time to time, by order of their mother, wiped away a tear which every now and then would rise to their eyelids, and the sight of this excited the pity of some and the anger of others, and filled the whole assembly with profound grief.

The king ate on stoically. He spoke several times to Gilbert, without taking his eyes off his plate; he spoke frequently to the queen, and always with deep affection.

At last he gave instructions to the commanders of his troops.

He was just finishing his breakfast, when an officer came in to announce to him that a compact body of men, on foot, coming from Paris, had just appeared at the end of the grand avenue, leading to the Place d'Armes.

On hearing this, the officers and guards at once rushed out of the room. The king raised his head and looked at Gilbert, but seeing that Gilbert smiled, he tranquilly continued eating.

The queen turned pale, and leaned towards Monsieur de Beauvau to request him to obtain information.

Monsieur de Beauvau ran out precipitately.

The queen then drew near to the window.

Five minutes afterwards, Monsieur de Beauvau returned.

"Sire," said he, on entering the room, "they are National Guards, from Paris, who, hearing the rumour spread yesterday in the capital of your Majesty's intention to visit the Parisians, assembled to the number of some ten thousand, for the purpose of coming out to meet you on the road, and, not meeting you so soon as they expected, they have pushed on to Versailles."

"What appear to be their intentions?" asked the king.

"The best in the world," replied Monsieur de Beauvau.

"That matters not," said the queen; "have the gates closed."

"Take good care not to do that," said the king; "it is quite enough that the palace doors remain closed."

The queen frowned, and darted a look at Gilbert.

The latter was awaiting this look from the queen, for one half his prediction was already fulfilled. He had promised the arrival of twenty thousand men, and ten thousand had already come.

The king turned to Monsieur de Beauvau.

"See that refreshments be given to these worthy people," said he.

Monsieur de Beauvau went down a second time; he transmitted to the cellarmen the order he had received from the king.

After doing this, he went upstairs again.

"Well?" said the king, in a tone of inquiry.

"Well, sire, your Parisians are in high discussion with the gentlemen of the Guards."

"How!" cried the king, "there is a discussion?"

"Oh! one of pure courteousness. As they have been informed that the king is to set out in two hours, they wish to await his departure, and march behind his Majesty's carriage."

"But," inquired the queen, in her turn, "they are on foot, I suppose?"

"Yes, madame."

"But the king has horses to his carriage, and the king travels fast, very fast — you know, Monsieur de Beauvau, that the king is accustomed to travelling very rapidly."

These words, pronounced in the tone the queen pronounced them, implied, —

"Put wings to his Majesty's carriage."

The king made a sign with his hand to stop the colloquy: —

"I will go at a walk."

The queen heaved a sigh which almost resembled a cry of anger.

"It would not be right," tranquilly added Louis XVI., "that I should make these worthy people run, who have taken the trouble to come so far to do me honour. My carriage shall be driven at a walk, and a slow walk, too, so that everybody may be able to follow me."

The whole of the company testified their admiration by a murmur of approbation; but at the same time there was seen on the countenances of several persons the reflection of the disapproval which was expressed by the features of the queen at so much goodness of soul, which she considered as mere madness.

A window was opened.

The queen turned round amazed. It was Gilbert, who, in his quality of physician, had only exercised the right which appertained to him of renewing the air of the dining-room, thickened by the odours of the viands and the breathing of two hundred persons.

"What is that?" asked the king.

"Sire," replied Gilbert, "the National Guards are down there on the pavement, exposed to the heat of the sun, and they must feel it very oppressive."

"Why not invite them upstairs to breakfast with the king?" sarcastically said one of her favourite officers to the queen.

"They should be taken to some shady place. Put them into the marble courtyard, into the vestibules, wherever it is cool," said the king.

"Ten thousand men in the vestibules!" exclaimed the queen.

"If they are scattered everywhere, there will be room enough for them," said the king.

"Scattered everywhere!" cried Marie Antoinette, "why, sire, you will teach them the way to your own bed-chamber."

This was the prophecy of terror which was to be realised at Versailles before three months had elapsed.

"They have a great many children with them, madame," said Gilbert, in a gentle tone.

"Children!" exclaimed the queen.

"Yes, madame; a great many have brought their children with them, as if on a party of pleasure. The children are dressed as little National Guards, so great is the enthusiasm for this new institution."

The queen opened her lips as if about to speak; but almost instantly she held down her head.

She had felt a desire to utter a kind word; but pride and hatred had stopped it ere it escaped her lips.

Gilbert looked at her attentively.

"Ah!" cried the king, "those poor children! When people bring children with them, it is plain that they have no intention to do harm to the father of a family; another reason for putting them in a cooler place, poor little things! Let them in, let them in!"

Gilbert then, gently shaking his head, appeared to say to the queen, who had remained silent, —

"There, madame; that is what *you* ought to have said. I had given you the opportunity. Your kind words would have been repeated, and you would have gained two years of popularity."

The queen comprehended Gilbert's mute language, and a blush suffused her face.

She felt the error she had committed, and immediately excused herself by a feeling of pride and resistance, which she expressed by a glance as a reply to Gilbert. During this time, Monsieur de Beauvau was following the king's orders relating to the National Guards.

Then were heard shouts of joy and benediction from that armed crowd, admitted by the king's order to the interior of the palace.

The acclamations, the fervent wishes, the loud hurrahs, ascended as a whirlwind to the hall in which the king and queen were seated, whom they reassured with regard to the disposition of the so much dreaded inhabitants of Paris.

"Sire," said Monsieur de Beauvau, "in what order is it that your Majesty determines the procession shall be conducted?"

"And the discussion between the National Guards and my officers?"

"Oh! sire, it has evaporated, vanished; those worthy people are so happy that they now say, 'We will go wherever you may please to place us. The king is our king as much as he is everybody else's king. Wherever he may be, he is ours.'"

The king looked at Marie Antoinette, who curled, with an ironical smile, her disdainful lip.

"Tell the National Guards," said Louis XVI., "that they may place themselves where they will."

"Your Majesty," said the queen, "will not forget that your body guards have the right of surrounding your carriage."

The officers, who perceived that the king was somewhat undecided, advanced to support the arguments of the queen.

"That is the case, undoubtedly," replied the king. "Well, we shall see."

Monsieur de Beauvau and Monsieur de Villeroy left the room to take their stations and to give the necessary orders.

The clock of Versailles struck ten.

"Well, well," said the king, "I shall put off my usual labours till to-morrow; these worthy people ought not to be kept waiting."

The king rose from table.

Marie Antoinette went to the king, clasped him in her arms, and embraced him. The children clung weeping to their father's neck. Louis XVI., who was much moved, endeavoured gently to release himself from them; he wished to conceal the emotions which would soon have become overpowering.

The queen stopped all the officers as they passed by her, seizing some by the arm, others by their swords.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said she, "I confide in you." And this eloquent exclamation recommended to them to be watchful for the safety of the king, who had just descended the staircase.

All of them placed their hands upon their hearts and upon their swords.

The queen smiled to thank them.

Gilbert remained in the room till almost the last.

"Monsieur," said the queen to him, "it was you who advised the king to take this step; it was you who induced the king to come to this resolution, in spite of my entreaties. Reflect, monsieur, that you have assumed a fearful responsibility as regards the wife, as regards the children."

"I am sensible of that," coldly replied Gilbert.

"And you will bring the king back to me safe and unhurt," she said, with a solemn gesture.

"Yes, madame."

"Reflect, that you will answer for his safety with your head."

Gilbert bowed.

"Reflect that your head is answerable," cried Marie Antoinette.

"Upon my head be the risk," said the doctor, again bowing. "Yes, madame; and this pledge I should consider as a hostage of but little value if I believed the king's safety to be at all threatened. But I have said, madame, that it is to a triumph that I this day conduct his Majesty."

"I must have news of him every hour," added the queen.

"You shall, madame; and this I swear to you."

"Go, monsieur, go at once; I hear the drums. The king is about to leave the palace."

Gilbert bowed, and, descending the grand staircase, found himself face to face with one of the king's aides-de-camp, who was seeking him by order of his Majesty.

They made him get into a carriage which belonged to Monsieur de Beauvau; the grand master of the ceremonies

not allowing, as he had not produced proofs of his nobility, that he should travel in one of the king's carriages.

Gilbert smiled, on finding himself alone in a carriage with arms upon its panels, Monsieur de Beauvau being on horseback, curvetting by the side of the royal carriage.

Then it struck him that it was ridiculous in him thus to be occupying a carriage on which was painted a princely coronet and armorial bearings.

This scruple was still annoying him when, from the midst of a crowd of National Guards who were following the carriage he heard the following conversation, though carried on in a half whisper, by men who were curiously stretching out their necks to look at him.

"Oh! that one, — that is the Prince de Beauvau."

"Why," cried a comrade, "you are mistaken."

"I tell you it must be so, since the carriage has the prince's arms upon it."

"The arms! the arms! I say that means nothing."

"Zounds!" said another, "what do the arms prove?"

"They prove that, if the arms of Monsieur de Beauvau are upon the coach, it must be Monsieur de Beauvau who is inside of it."

"Monsieur de Beauvau, — is he a patriot?" asked a woman.

"Pooh!" exclaimed the National Guard.

Gilbert again smiled.

"But I tell you," said the first contradictor, "that it is not the prince; the prince is stout, that one is thin; the prince wears the uniform of a commandant of the Guards, that one wears a black coat; it is his intendant."

A murmur, which was by no means favourable to Gilbert, arose among the crowd, who had degraded him by giving him this title, which was not at all flattering.

"Why, no, by the devil's horns!" cried a loud voice, the sound of which made Gilbert start. It was the voice of a man who, with his elbows and his fists, was clearing his way to get near the carriage. "No," said he, "it is

neither Monsieur de Beauvau nor his intendant. It is that brave and famous patriot, and even the most famous of all the patriots. Why, Monsieur Gilbert, what the devil are you doing in the carriage of a prince?"

"Ha! it is you, Father Billot," exclaimed the doctor.

"By Heaven!" replied the farmer, "I took good care not to lose the opportunity."

"And Pitou?" asked Gilbert.

"Oh, he is not far off. Holla! Pitou, where are you? Come this way, — come quickly!"

And Pitou, on hearing this invitation, managed, by a dexterous use of his shoulders, to slip through the crowd till he reached Billot's side, and then, with admiration, bowed to Gilbert.

"Good day, Monsieur Gilbert," said he.

"Good day, Pitou; good day, my friend."

"Gilbert! Gilbert! who is he?" inquired the crowd of one another.

"Such is fame," thought the doctor, — "well understood at Villers-Cotterêts, yes, but at Paris popularity is everything."

He alighted from the carriage, which continued its onward progress at a walk, while Gilbert moved on with the crowd, on foot, leaning on Billot's arm.

He in a few words related to the farmer his visit to Versailles, the good disposition of the king and the royal family; he in a few minutes preached such a propaganda of royalism to the group by which he was surrounded, that, simple and delighted, these worthy people, who were yet easily induced to receive good impressions, uttered loud and continued shouts of "Long live the king!" which, taken up by those who preceded them, soon reached the head of the line, and deafened Louis XVI. in his carriage.

"I will see the king!" cried Billot, electrified. "I must get close to him, and see him well; I came all this way on purpose. I will judge him by his face, — the eye of an honest man can always speak for itself. Let us get nearer to his carriage, Monsieur Gilbert, shall we not?"

"Wait a little, and it will be easy for us to do so," replied Gilbert, "for I see one of Monsieur de Beauvau's aides-de-camp, who is seeking for some one, coming this way."

And in fact a cavalier, who, managing his horse with every sort of precaution amid the groups of fatigued but joyous pedestrians, was endeavouring to get near the carriage which Gilbert had just left.

Gilbert called to him.

"Are you not looking, monsieur, for Doctor Gilbert?" he inquired.

"Himself," replied the aide-de-camp.

"In that case, I am he."

"Monsieur de Beauvau sends for you, at the king's request."

These high-sounding words made Billot's eyes open widely, and on the crowd they had the effect of making them open their ranks to allow Gilbert to pass. Gilbert glided through them, followed by Billot and Pitou, the aide-de-camp going before them, who kept on repeating, —

"Make room, gentlemen, make room! let us pass, in the king's name, let us pass!"

Gilbert soon reached the door of the royal carriage, which was moving onward as if drawn by Merovingian oxen.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE JOURNEY.

THUS pushing and thus pushed, but still following Monsieur de Beauvau's aide-de-camp, Gilbert, Billot, and Pitou at length reached the carriage in which the king, accompanied by Messieurs d'Estaing and de Villequier, was slowly advancing amid the crowd, which continually increased.

Extraordinary, unknown, unheard of spectacle! for it was the first time that such a one had been seen. All those National Guards from the surrounding villages, impromptu soldiers suddenly sprung up, hastened, with cries of joy, to greet the king in his progress, saluting him with their benedictions, endeavouring to gain a look from him, and then, instead of returning to their homes, taking place in the procession, and accompanying their monarch towards Paris.

And why? No one could have given a reason for it. Were they obeying an instinct? They had seen, but they wished again to see, this well-beloved king.

For it must be acknowledged that at this period Louis XVI. was an adored king, to whom the French would have raised altars, had it not been for the profound contempt with which Voltaire had inspired them for all altars.

Louis XVI. therefore had no altars raised to him, but solely because the free-thinkers of that day had too high an esteem for him to inflict upon him such a humiliation.

Louis XVI. perceived Gilbert leaning upon the arm of Billot; behind them marched Pitou, still dragging after him his long sabre.

"Ah, doctor," cried the king, "what magnificent weather, and what a magnificent people!"

"You see, sire," replied Gilbert.

Then, turning towards the king, —

"What did I promise your Majesty?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes, and you have worthily fulfilled your promise."

The king raised his head, and with the intention of being heard, —

"We move but slowly," said he; "and yet it appears to me that we advance but too rapidly for all that we have to see."

"Sire," said Monsieur de Beauvau, "and yet, at the pace your Majesty is going you are travelling about one league in three hours. It would be difficult to go more slowly."

In fact the horses were stopped every moment; harangues and replies were interchanged; the National Guards *fraternised* — the word was only then invented — with the body guards of his Majesty.

"Ah!" said Gilbert to himself, who contemplated this singular spectacle as a philosopher, "if they fraternise with the body guards, it was because before being friends they had been enemies."

"I say, Monsieur Gilbert," said Billot, in a half whisper, "I have had a good look at the king, I have listened to him with all my ears. Well, my opinion is that the king is an honest man!"

And the enthusiasm which animated Billot was so overpowering, that he raised his voice in uttering these last words to such a pitch, that the king and his staff heard him.

The officers laughed outright.

The king smiled, and then, nodding his head, —

"That is praise which pleases me," said he.

These words were spoken loud enough for Billot to hear them.

"Oh! you are right, sire, for I do not give it to everybody," replied Billot, entering at once into conversation with his king, as Michaud, the miller, did with Henri IV.

"And that flatters me so much the more," rejoined the king, much embarrassed at not knowing how to maintain his dignity as a king, and speak graciously as a good patriot.

Alas! the poor prince was not yet accustomed to call himself King of the French.

He thought that he was still called the King of France.

Billot, beside himself with joy, did not give himself the trouble to reflect whether Louis, in a philosophical point of view, had abdicated the title of king to adopt the title of a man. Billot, who felt how much this language resembled rustic plainness, Billot applauded himself for having comprehended the king, and for having been comprehended by him.

Therefore, from that moment Billot became more and more enthusiastic. He drank from the king's looks, according to the Virgilian expression, deep draughts of love for constitutional royalty, and communicated it to Pitou, who, too full of his own love and the superfluity of Billot's, overflowed at first in stentorian shouts, then in more squeaking, and finally in less articulate ones of "Long live the king! Long live the father of the people!"

This modification in the voice of Pitou was produced by degrees in proportion as he became more and more hoarse.

Pitou was as hoarse as a bull-frog when the procession reached the Point du Jour, where the Marquis de Lafayette, on his celebrated white charger, was keeping in order the undisciplined and agitated cohorts of the National Guard, who had from five o'clock that morning lined the road to receive the royal procession.

At this time it was nearly two o'clock.

The interview between the king and this new chief of

armed France passed off in a manner that was satisfactory to all present.

The king, however, began to feel fatigued. He no longer spoke; he contented himself with merely smiling.

The general-in-chief of the Parisian militia could no longer utter a command; he only gesticulated.

The king had the satisfaction to find that the crowd as frequently cried, "Long live the king!" as "Long live Lafayette!" Unfortunately, this was the last time he was destined to enjoy this gratification of his self-love.

During this, Gilbert remained constantly at the door of the king's carriage, Billot near Gilbert, Pitou near Billot.

Gilbert, faithful to his promise, had found means, since his departure from Versailles, to despatch four couriers to the queen.

These couriers had each been the bearer of good news, for at every step of his journey the king had seen caps thrown up in the air as he passed, only on each of these caps shone the colours of the nation, a species of reproach addressed to the white cockade which the king's guards and the king himself wore in their hats.

In the midst of his joy and his enthusiasm, this discrepancy in the cockades was the only thing which annoyed Billot.

Billot had on his cocked hat an enormous tricoloured cockade.

The king had a white cockade in his hat; the tastes of the subject and the king were not therefore absolutely similar.

This idea so much perplexed him, that he could not refrain from unburthening his mind upon the subject to Gilbert, at a moment when the latter was not conversing with the king.

"Monsieur Gilbert," said he to him, "how is it that his Majesty does not wear the national cockade?"

"Because, my dear Billot, either the king does not know that there is a new cockade, or he considers that the cockade he wears ought to be the cockade of the nation."

"Oh, no! oh, no! since his cockade is a white one, and our cockade is a tricoloured one."

"One moment," said Gilbert, stopping Billot just as he was about to launch with heart and soul into the arguments advanced by the newspapers of the day, "the king's cockade is white, as the flag of France is white. The king is in no way to blame for this. Cockade and flag were white long before he came into the world. Moreover, my dear Billot, that flag has performed great feats, and so has the white cockade. There was a white cockade in the hat of Admiral de Suffren, when he re-established our flag in the East Indies. There was a white cockade in the hat of Assas, and it was by that the Germans recognised him in the night, when he allowed himself to be killed rather than that they should take his soldiers by surprise. There was a white cockade in the hat of Marshal Saxe, when he defeated the English at Fontenoy. There was, in fine, a white cockade in the hat of the Prince de Condé, when he beat the Imperialists at Rocroi, at Fribourg, and at Lens. The white cockade has done all this, and a great many other things, my dear Billot, while the national cockade, which will perhaps make a tour round the world, as Lafayette has predicted, has not yet had time to accomplish anything, seeing that it has existed only for the last three days. I do not say that it will rest idle, do you understand, but, in short, having as yet done nothing, it gives the king full right to wait till it has done something."

"How? the national cockade has as yet done nothing?" cried Billot; "has it not taken the Bastile?"

"It has," said Gilbert, sorrowfully; "you are right, Billot."

"And that is why," triumphantly rejoined the farmer, "that is why the king ought to adopt it."

Gilbert gave a furious nudge with his elbow into Billot's ribs, for he had perceived the king was listening, and then, in a low tone, —

"Are you mad, Billot?" said he; "and against whom

was the Bastille taken, then ? Against royalty, it seems to me. And now you would make the king wear the trophies of your triumph, and the insignia of his own defeat. Madman ! the king is all heart, all goodness, all candour, and you would wish him to show himself a hypocrite ! ”

“ But,” said Billot, more humbly, without, however, giving up the argument altogether, “ it was not precisely against the king that the Bastille was taken, it was against despotism. ”

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders, but with the delicacy of the superior man, who will not place his foot on his inferior for fear that he should crush him.

“ No,” said Billot, again becoming animated, “ it is not against our good king that we have fought, but against his satellites. ”

Now in those days they said, speaking politically, satellites instead of saying soldiers, as they said in the theatres courser instead of horse.

“ Moreover,” continued Billot, and with some appearance of reason, “ he disapproves them, since he comes thus in the midst of us ; and if he disapproves them, he must approve us. It is for our happiness and his honour that we have worked, — we, the conquerors of the Bastille. ”

“ Alas ! alas ! ” murmured Gilbert, who did not know how to conciliate the appearance of the king’s features with that which he knew must be passing in his heart.

As to the king, he began, amid the confused murmurs of the march, to understand some few words of the conversation entered into by his side.

Gilbert, who perceived the attention which the king was paying to the discussion, made every effort to lead Billot on to less slippery ground than that on which he had ventured.

Suddenly the procession stopped ; it had arrived at the Cours la Reine, at the gate formerly called La Conférence, in the Champs Élysées.

There a deputation of electors and aldermen, presided over by the new mayor, Bailly, had drawn themselves up in

fine array, with a guard of three hundred men, commanded by a colonel, besides at least three hundred members of the National Assembly, taken, as it will be readily imagined, from the ranks of the Tiers Etat.

Two of the electors united their strength and their address to hold in equilibrium a vast salver of gilt plate, upon which were lying two enormous keys, the keys of the city of Paris during the days of Henri IV.

This imposing spectacle at once put a stop to all individual conversations, and every one, whether in the crowd or in the ranks, immediately directed his attention to the speeches about to be pronounced on the occasion.

Bailly, the worthy man of science, the admirable astronomer, who had been made a deputy in defiance to his own will, a mayor in spite of his objections, an orator notwithstanding his unwillingness, had prepared a long speech. This speech had for its exordium, according to the strictest laws of rhetoric, a laudatory encomium on the king, from the coming into power of Monsieur Turgot, down to the taking of the Bastile. Little was wanting, such privilege has eloquence, to attribute to the king the initiative in the acts of the people.

Bailly was delighted with the speech he had prepared, when an incident—it is Bailly himself who relates this incident in his Memoirs—furnished him with a new exordium, very much more picturesque than the one he had prepared,—the only one, moreover, which remained engraved on the minds of the people, always ready to seize upon good, and above all fine sounding phrases, when founded upon a material fact.

While walking towards the place of meeting, with the aldermen and the electors, Bailly was alarmed at the weight of the keys which he was about to present to the king.

“Do you believe,” said he, laughingly, “that, after having shown these to the king, I will undergo the fatigue of carrying them back to Paris?”

"What will you do with them, then?" asked one of the electors.

"What will I do with them?" said Bailly; "why, I will give them to you, or I will throw them into some ditch at the foot of a tree."

"Take good care not to do that," cried the elector, completely horrified. "Do you not know that these keys are the same which the city of Paris offered to Henri IV. after the siege? They are very precious; they are inestimable antiquities."

"You are right," rejoined Bailly, "the keys offered to Henri IV., the conqueror of Paris, and which are now to be offered to Louis XVI. — Eh! why, I declare now," said the worthy mayor to himself, "this would be a capital antithesis in my speech."

And instantly he took a pencil and wrote above the speech he had prepared the following exordium: —

"Sire, I present to your Majesty the keys of the good city of Paris. They are the same which were offered to Henri IV. He had reconquered his people; to-day the people have reconquered their king."

The phrase was well turned, and it was also true. It implanted itself in the memories of the Parisians; and of all the speeches, all the works of Bailly, this only survives.

As to Louis XVI., he approved it by an affirmative nod, but colouring deeply at the same time; for he felt the epigrammatic irony which it conveyed, although concealed beneath a semblance of respect and oratorical flourishes.

"Oh! Marie Antoinette," murmured Louis XVI. to himself, "would not allow herself to be deceived by this pretended veneration of Monsieur Bailly, and would reply in a very different manner to that which I am about to do to the untoward astronomer."

And these reflections were the cause why Louis XVI., who had paid too much attention to the commencement of the speech, did not listen at all to the conclusion of it, nor

to that of the president of the electors, Monsieur Delavigne, of which he heard neither the beginning nor the end.

However, the addresses being concluded, the king, fearing not to appear sufficiently delighted with their efforts to say that which was agreeable to him, replied in a very noble tone, and without making any allusion to what the orators had said, that the *homage* of the city of Paris and of the electors was exceedingly gratifying to him.

After which he gave orders for the procession to move on towards the Hôtel de Ville.

But before it recommenced its march, he dismissed his body guard, wishing to respond by a gracious confidence to the half politeness which had been evinced to him by the municipality, through their organs, the president of the electors and Monsieur Bailly.

Being thus alone amid the enormous mass of National Guards and spectators, the carriage advanced more rapidly.

Gilbert and his companion Billot still retained their posts on the right of the carriage.

At the moment when they were crossing the Place Louis XV., the report of a gun was heard, fired from the opposite side of the Seine, and a white smoke arose, like a veil of incense, towards the blue sky, where it as suddenly vanished.

As if the report of this musket shot had found an echo within his breast, Gilbert had felt himself struck, as by a violent blow. For a second his breath failed him, and he hastily pressed his hand to his heart, where he felt a sudden and severe pain.

At the same instant a cry of distress was heard around the royal carriage; a woman had fallen to the ground, shot through the right shoulder.

One of the buttons of Gilbert's coat, a large steel button, cut diamond fashion, as they were worn at the period, had just been struck diagonally by that same ball.

It had performed the office of a breastplate, and the ball

had glanced off from it; this had caused the painful shock which Gilbert had experienced.

Part of his waistcoat and his frill had been torn off by the ball.

This ball, on glancing from the button, had killed the unfortunate woman, who was instantly removed from the spot, bleeding profusely.

The king had heard the shot, but had seen nothing.

He leaned towards Gilbert, and, smiling, said, —

“They are burning gunpowder yonder, to do me honour.”

“Yes, sire,” replied Gilbert.

But he was careful not to mention to his Majesty the nature of the ovation which they were offering to him.

In his own mind, however, he acknowledged that the queen had some reason for the apprehensions she had expressed, since, but for his standing immediately before and closing the carriage door as it were hermetically, that ball, which had glanced off from his steel button, would have gone straight to the king’s breast.

And now from what hand had proceeded this so well aimed shot?

No one then wished to inquire, so that it will never now be known.

Billot, pale from what he had just seen, his eyes incessantly attracted to the rent made in Gilbert’s coat, waistcoat, and frill, excited Pitou to shout as loudly as he could, “Long live the *Father of the French!*”

The event of the day was so great that this episode was quickly forgotten.

At last, Louis XVI. arrived in front of the Hôtel de Ville, after having been saluted on the Pont Neuf by a discharge of cannon, which, at all events, were not loaded with ball.

Upon the façade of the Hôtel de Ville was an inscription, in large letters, black in the daylight, but which when it was dark were to form a brilliant transparency. This

inscription was the result of the generous lucubrations of the municipal authorities.

The inscription was as follows :—

“TO LOUIS XVI., FATHER OF THE FRENCH, AND KING OF A FREE PEOPLE.”

Another antithesis, much more important than the one contained in Monsieur Bailly's speech, and which excited shouts of admiration from all the Parisians assembled in the square.

The inscription attracted the attention of Billot.

But as Billot could not read, he made Pitou read the inscription to him.

Billot made him read it a second time, as if he had not understood it perfectly at first.

Then, when Pitou had repeated the phrase, without varying in a single word, —

“Is it that ?” cried he ; “is it that ?”

“Undoubtedly,” replied Pitou.

“The municipality has written that the king is a king of a free people ?”

“Yes, Father Billot.”

“Well, then,” exclaimed Billot, “since the nation is free, it has the right to offer its cockade to the king.”

And with one bound, rushing before the king, who was then alighting from his carriage at the front steps of the Hôtel de Ville, —

“Sire,” said he, “you saw on the Pont Neuf that the Henri IV. in bronze wore the national cockade.”

“Well ?” cried the king.

“Well, sire, if Henri IV. wears the national cockade, you can wear it too.”

“Certainly,” said Louis XVI., much embarrassed, “and if I had one —”

“Well,” cried Billot, in a louder tone, and raising his hand, “in the name of the people I offer you this one in the place of yours ; accept it.”

Bailly intervened.

The king was pale. He began to see the progressive encroachment. He looked at Bailly as if to ask his opinion.

"Sire," said the latter, "it is the distinctive sign of every Frenchman."

"In that case, I accept it," said the king, taking the cockade from Billot's hands.

And putting aside his own white cockade, he placed the tricoloured one in his hat.

An immense triumphant hurrah was echoed from the great crowd upon the square.

Gilbert turned away his head, much grieved.

He considered that the people were encroaching too rapidly, and that the king did not resist sufficiently.

"Long live the king!" cried Billot, who thus gave the signal for a second round of applause.

"The king is dead," murmured Gilbert; "there is no longer a king in France."

An arch of steel had been formed, by a thousand swords held up, from the place at which the king had alighted from his carriage to the door of the hall in which the municipal authorities were waiting to receive him.

He passed beneath this arch, and disappeared in the gloomy passages of the Hôtel de Ville.

"That is not a triumphal arch," said Gilbert; "but the Caudine Forks."

Then, with a sigh, —

"Ah! what will the queen say to this?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SHOWING WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE AT VERSAILLES WHILE
THE KING WAS LISTENING TO THE SPEECHES OF THE
MUNICIPALITY.

IN the interior of the Hôtel de Ville the king received the most flattering welcome; he was styled the Restorer of Liberty.

Being invited to speak, — for the thirst for speeches became every day more intense, and the king wishing, in short, to ascertain the feelings of all present, — he placed his hand upon his heart, and said, —

“Gentlemen, you may always calculate on my affection.”

While he was thus listening in the Hôtel de Ville to the communications from the government, — for from that day a real government was constituted in France besides that of the throne and the National Assembly, — the people outside the building were admiring the beautiful horses, the gilt carriage, the lackeys, and the coachmen of his Majesty.

Pitou, since the entry of the king into the Hôtel de Ville, had, thanks to a louis given by Father Billot, amused himself in making a goodly quantity of cockades of red and blue ribands, which he had purchased with the louis, and with these, which were of all sizes, he had decorated the horses' ears, the harness, and the whole equipage.

On seeing this, the imitative people had literally metamorphosed the king's carriage into a cockade shop.

The coachman and the footmen were profusely ornamented with them.

They had, moreover, slipped some dozens of them into the carriage itself.

However, it must be said that Monsieur de Lafayette, who had remained on horseback, had endeavoured to restrain these honest propagators of the national colours, but had not been able to succeed.

And therefore, when the king came out, —

“Oh! oh!” cried he, on seeing this strange bedizenment of his equipage.

Then with his hand he made a sign to Monsieur de Lafayette to approach him.

Monsieur de Lafayette respectfully advanced, lowering his sword as he came near the king.

“Monsieur de Lafayette,” said the king to him, “I was looking for you to say to you that I confirm your appointment to the command of the National Guards.”

And he got into his carriage amid a universal acclamation.

As to Gilbert, tranquillised henceforward as to the personal safety of the king, he had remained in the hall with Bailly and the electors.

The speechifying had not yet terminated.

However, on hearing the loud hurrahs which saluted the departure of the king, he approached a window to cast a last glance on the square, and to observe the conduct of his two country friends.

They were both, or, at least they appeared to be, still on the best terms with the king.

Suddenly, Gilbert perceived a horseman advancing rapidly along the Quai Pelletier, covered with dust, and obliging the crowd, which was still docile and respectful, to open its ranks and let him pass.

The people, who were good and complaisant on this great day, smiled while repeating, —

“One of the king’s officers! one of the king’s officers!”

And cries of “Long live the king!” saluted the officer as he passed on, and women patted his horse’s neck, which was white with foam.

This officer at last managed to reach the king's carriage, and arrived there at the moment when a servant was closing the door of it.

"What! is it you, Charny?" cried Louis XVI.

And then, in a lower tone, —

"How are they all out yonder?" he inquired.

Then, in a whisper, —

"The queen?"

"Very anxious, sire," replied the officer, who had thrust his head completely into the carriage window.

"Do you return to Versailles?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, then, tell our friends they have no cause for uneasiness. All has gone off marvellously well."

Charny bowed, raised his head, and perceived Monsieur de Lafayette, who made a friendly sign to him.

Charny went to him, and Lafayette shook hands with him; and the crowd, seeing this, almost carried both officer and horse as far as the quay, where, thanks to the vigilant orders given to the National Guards, a line was formed to facilitate the king's departure.

The king ordered that the carriage should move out at a walking pace till it reached the Place Louis XV. There he found his body-guards, who were awaiting the return of the king, and not without impatience; so that this impatience, in which every one participated, kept on increasing every moment, and the horses were driven on at a pace which increased in rapidity as they advanced upon the road to Versailles.

Gilbert, from the balcony of the window, had fully comprehended the meaning of the arrival of this horseman, although he did not know his person. He readily imagined the anguish which the queen must have suffered, and especially for the last three hours, for during that time he had not been able to despatch a single courier to Versailles, amid the throng by which he was surrounded, without exciting suspicion or betraying weakness.

He had but a faint idea of all that had been occurring at Versailles.

We shall now return there with our readers, for we do not wish to make them read too long a course of history.

The king had received the last courier from the queen at three o'clock.

Gilbert had found means to despatch a courier just at the moment the king entered the Hôtel de Ville, under the arch formed by the swords of the National Guards.

The Countess de Charny was with the queen. The countess had only just left her bed, which, from severe indisposition, she had kept since the previous day.

She was still very pale. She had hardly strength to raise her eyes, the heavy lids of which seemed to be constantly falling, weighed down either with grief or shame.

The queen, on perceiving her, smiled, but with that habitual smile which appears, to those familiar with the court, to be stereotyped upon the lips of princes and of kings.

Then, as if overjoyed that her husband was in safety, —

“Good news again!” exclaimed the queen to those who surrounded her; “may the whole day pass off as well!”

“Oh, madame!” said a courtier, “your Majesty alarms yourself too much. The Parisians know too well the responsibility which weighs upon them.”

“But, madame,” said another courtier, who was not so confiding, “is your Majesty well assured as to the authenticity of this intelligence?”

“Oh, yes!” replied the queen. “The person who writes to me has engaged, at the hazard of his head, to be responsible for the safety of the king. Moreover, I believe him to be a friend.”

“Oh! if he is a friend,” rejoined the courtier, bowing, “that is quite another matter.”

Madame de Lamballe, who was standing at a little distance, approached.

“It is,” said she, “the lately appointed physician, is it not?”

"Yes, Gilbert," unthinkingly replied the queen, without reflecting that she was striking a fearful blow at one who stood close beside her.

"Gilbert!" exclaimed Andrée, starting as if a viper had bit her to the heart, "Gilbert your Majesty's friend!"

Andrée had turned round with flashing eyes, her hands clinched with anger and shame, and seemed proudly to accuse the queen, both by her looks and attitude.

"But, nevertheless—" said the queen, hesitating.

"Oh madame, madame!" murmured Andrée, in a tone of the bitterest reproach.

A mortal silence pervaded the whole room after this mysterious incident.

In the midst of this silence a light step was heard upon the tessellated floor of the adjoining room.

"Monsieur de Charny!" said the queen, in a half whisper, as if to warn Andrée to compose herself.

Charny had heard—he had seen all—only he could not comprehend it.

He remarked the pallid countenance of Andrée, and the embarrassed air of Marie Antoinette.

It would have been a breach of etiquette to question the queen; but Andrée was his wife, he had the right to question her.

He therefore went to her, and in the most friendly tone,—

"What is the matter, madame?" said he.

Andrée made an effort to recover her composure.

"Nothing, count," she replied.

Charny then turned towards the queen, who, notwithstanding her profound experience in equivocal positions, had ten times essayed to muster up a smile, but could not succeed.

"You appear to doubt the devotedness of this Monsieur Gilbert," said he to Andrée. "Have you any motive for suspecting his fidelity?"

Andrée was silent.

"Speak, madame, speak!" said Charny, insistingly.

Then, as Andrée still remained mute, —

"Oh, speak, madame!" cried he. "This delicacy now becomes condemnable. Reflect, that on it may depend the safety of our master."

"I do not know, monsieur, what can be your motive for saying that," replied Andrée.

"You said, and I heard you say it, madame. I appeal, moreover, to the princess," — and Charny bowed to the Princess de Lamballe, — "you exclaimed, with an expression of great surprise, 'Gilbert your Majesty's friend!'"

"'T is true, you did say that, my dear," said the Princess de Lamballe, with her habitual ingenuousness.

Then, going closer to Andrée, —

"If you do know anything, Monsieur de Charny is right."

"For pity's sake, madame! for pity's sake!" said Andrée, in an imploring tone, but so low that it could not be heard by any one but the princess.

The princess retired a few steps.

"Oh, good Heaven! it was but a trifling matter," said the queen, feeling that, should she any longer delay to interfere, she would be failing in propriety. "The countess was expressing her apprehensions, which doubtless were but vague. She had said that it was difficult for a man who had taken part in the American revolution, one who is the friend of Monsieur Lafayette, to be our friend."

"Yes, vague," mechanically repeated Andrée, — "very vague."

"A fear of a similar nature to one which had been expressed by one of these gentlemen before the countess had expressed it here," rejoined Marie Antoinette.

And with her eyes she pointed out the courtier whose doubts had given rise to this discussion.

But it required more than this to convince Charny. The great confusion which had appeared on his entering the room persuaded him that there was some mystery in the affair.

He therefore persisted.

"It matters not, madame," said he. "It seems to me that it is your duty not to express vain fears, but, on the contrary, to state precise facts."

"What, monsieur," said the queen, with some asperity, "you are returning to that subject?"

"Madame!"

"Your pardon, but I find that you are still questioning the Countess de Charny."

"Excuse me, madame," said Charny; "it is from interest for —"

"For your self-love, is it not? Ah! Monsieur de Charny," added the queen, with an ironical expression of which the count felt the whole weight, "acknowledge the thing frankly. You are jealous."

"Jealous! jealous!" cried De Charny, colouring. "But of what? I ask this of your Majesty."

"Of your wife, apparently," replied the queen, harshly.

"Madame!" stammered Charny, perfectly astounded at this unlooked for attack.

"It is perfectly natural," drily rejoined Marie Antoinette; "and the countess assuredly is worth the trouble."

Charny darted a look at the queen to warn her that she was going too far.

But this was useless trouble, superfluous precaution. When this lioness was wounded, and felt the burning pain galling her heart, she no longer knew restraint.

"Yes, I can comprehend your being jealous, Monsieur de Charny, — jealous and uneasy; it is the natural state of every soul that loves, and which consequently is on the watch."

"Madame!" repeated Charny.

"And therefore I," pursued the queen, "I experience precisely the same feelings which you do at this moment. I am at once a prey to jealousy and anxiety." She emphasised the word jealousy. "The king is at Paris, and I no longer live."

"But, madame," observed Charny, who could not at all comprehend the meaning of this storm, the thunder of which appeared to growl more fiercely, and the lightnings to flash more vividly every moment, "you have just now received news of the king; the news is good, and you must feel more tranquil."

"And did you feel tranquillised when the countess and myself, a moment ago, endeavoured to reassure you?"

Charny bit his lip.

Andrée began to raise her head, at once surprised and alarmed, — surprised at what she heard, alarmed at what she thought she understood.

The silence which had ensued after the first question which Charny had addressed to Andrée was now renewed, and the company seemed anxiously awaiting Charny's answer to the queen. Charny remained silent.

"In fact," resumed the queen, with still increasing anger, "it is the destiny of people who love to think only of the object of their affection. It would be happiness to those poor hearts to sacrifice pitilessly everything, yes, everything to the feeling by which they are agitated. Good Heaven! how anxious am I with regard to the king!"

One of the courtiers ventured to remark that other couriers would arrive.

"Oh! why am I not at Paris, instead of being here? — why am I not with the king?" said Marie Antoinette, who had seen that Charny had become agitated since she had been endeavouring to instil that jealousy into his mind which she so violently experienced.

Charny bowed.

"If it be only that, madame," said he, "I will go there; and if, as your Majesty apprehends; the king is in any danger, if that valuable life be exposed, you may rely, madame, that it shall not be from not having exposed mine in his defence."

"That I know."

Charny bowed, and moved towards the door.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" cried Andrée, rushing between Charny and the door, "be careful of yourself!"

Nothing was wanting to the completion of this scene but this outburst of the fears of Andrée. And therefore, as soon as Andrée had been thus impelled, and in spite of herself, to cast aside her habitual coldness, — no sooner had she uttered these imprudent words, and evinced this unwonted solicitude, than the queen became frightfully pale.

"Why, madame," she cried to Andrée, "how is this, that you here usurp the part of a queen?"

"Who, — I, madame?" stammered Andrée, comprehending that she had for the first time allowed to burst forth from her lips the fire which for so long a period had consumed her soul.

"What!" continued Marie Antoinette, "your husband is in the king's service. He is about to set out to seek the king. If he is exposing his life, it is for the king; and when the question is the service of the king, you advise Monsieur de Charny to be careful of himself."

On hearing these appalling words, Andrée was near fainting. She staggered, and would have fallen to the floor, had not Charny rushed forward and caught her in his arms.

An indignant look, which Charny could not restrain, completed the despair of Marie Antoinette, who had considered herself an offended rival, but who in fact had been an unjust queen.

"The queen is right," at length said Charny, with some effort, "and your movement, madame, was inconsiderate. You have no husband, madame, when the interests of the king are in question; and I ought to be the first to request you to restrain your sensibility, if I presumed that you deigned to feel any alarm for me."

Then, turning towards Marie Antoinette, —

"I am at the queen's orders," said he, coldly, "and I set out at once. It is I who will bring you news of the king, — good news, madame, or I will not bring any."

Then, having spoken these words, he bowed almost to the ground, and left the room before the queen, moved at once by terror and by anger, had thought of detaining him.

A moment afterwards was heard the sound of a horse's hoofs clattering over the pavement of the courtyard, and galloping at full speed.

The queen remained motionless, but a prey to internal agitation, so much the more terrible from her making the most violent efforts to conceal it.

Some understood while others could not comprehend the cause of this agitation, but they all showed that they respected their sovereign's tranquillity.

Marie Antoinette was left to her own thoughts.

Andrée withdrew with the rest from the apartment, abandoning Marie Antoinette to the caresses of her two children, whom she had sent for, and who had been brought to her.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RETURN.

NIGHT had returned, bringing with it its train of fears and gloomy visions, when suddenly shouts were heard from the front of the palace.

The queen started and rose. She was not far from a window, which she opened.

Almost at the same instant, servants transported with joy ran into the queen's room, crying, —

“A courier, madame, a courier!”

Three minutes afterwards a hussar rushed into the antechamber.

He was a lieutenant despatched by Monsieur de Charny. He had ridden at full speed from Sèvres.

“And the king?” said Marie Antoinette.

“His Majesty will be here in a quarter of an hour,” replied the officer, who was so much out of breath that he could scarcely articulate.

“Safe and well?” asked the queen.

“Safe, well, and smiling, madame,” replied the officer.

“You have seen him, then?”

“No, madame, but Monsieur de Charny told me so, when he sent me off.”

The queen started once more at hearing this name, which chance had thus associated with that of the king.

“I thank you, monsieur; you had better rest yourself,” said the queen to the young gentleman.

The young officer made his obeisance and withdrew.

Marie Antoinette, taking her children by the hand, went

towards the grand entrance of the palace, where were already assembled all the courtiers and the servants.

The penetrating eye of the queen perceived, on the first step, a female form attired in white, her elbow leaning upon the stone balustrade, and looking eagerly into the darkness, that she might first discern the approach of the king's carriage.

It was Andrée, whom even the presence of the queen did not arouse from her fixed gaze.

She, who generally was so eager to fly to the side of her mistress, evidently had not seen her, or disdained to appear to have seen her.

She, then, bore her ill-will for the vivacity which she had shown that afternoon, and from which cruel vivacity she had so much suffered.

Or else, carried away by a powerfully interesting sentiment, she was with eager anxiety looking for the return of Charny, for whom she had manifested so much affectionate apprehension.

A twofold poniard-stab to the queen, which deepened a wound that was still bleeding.

She lent but an absent ear to the compliments and joyful congratulations of her other friends, and the courtiers generally.

She even felt for a moment her mind abstracted from the violent grief which had overwhelmed her all the evening. There was even a respite to the anxiety excited in her heart by the king's journey, threatened by so many enemies.

But with her strong mind she immediately chased all that was not legitimate affection from her heart. At the feet of God she cast her jealousy; she immolated her anger and her secret feelings to the holiness of her conjugal vow.

It was doubtless God who thus endowed her, for her quiet and support, with this faculty of loving the king, her husband, beyond every being in the world.

At that moment, at least, she so felt, or thought she felt; the pride of royalty raised the queen above all terrestrial passions; love of the king was her egotism.

She had therefore driven from her breast all the petty vengeance of a woman, and the coquettish frivolity of the lover, when the flambeaux of the escort appeared at the end of the avenue.

These lights increased in volume every moment, from the rapidity with which the escort advanced.

They could hear the neighing and the hard breathing of the horses. The ground trembled, amid the silence of the night, beneath the weight of the squadrons which surrounded and followed the king's carriage.

The gates were thrown open, the guards rushed forth to receive the king with shouts of enthusiasm. The carriage rolled sonorously over the pavement of the great courtyard.

Dazzled, delighted, fascinated, strongly excited by the varied emotions she had experienced during the whole day, by those which she then felt, the queen flew down the stairs to receive the king.

Louis XVI., as soon as he had alighted from his carriage, ascended the staircase with all the rapidity which was possible, surrounded as he was by his officers, all agitated by the events of the day and their triumph; while in the courtyard, the guards, mixing unceremoniously with the grooms and equerries, tore from the carriages and the harness all the cockades which the enthusiasm of the Parisians had attached to them.

The king and the queen met upon a marble landing. The queen, with a cry of joy and love, several times pressed the king to her heart.

She sobbed as if, on thus meeting him, she had believed she was never again to see him.

Yielding thus to the emotions of an overflowing heart, she did not observe the silent pressure of their hands which Charny and Andrée had just exchanged.

This pressure of the hand was nothing; but Andrée was at the foot of the steps; she was the first Charny had seen and touched.

The queen, after having presented her children to the king, made Louis XVI. kiss them, and then the dauphin, seeing in his father's hat the new cockade, on which the torches cast an ensanguined light, exclaimed, with childish astonishment, —

“Why, papa, what have you on your cockade? Is it blood?”

It was the national red.

The queen uttered a cry, and examined it in her turn.

The king bent down his head, under the pretence of again kissing his little daughter, but in reality to conceal his shame.

Marie Antoinette, with profound disgust, tore the cockade from the hat, without seeing — the noble, furious woman — that she was wounding to the heart a nation that would one day know how to avenge itself.

“Throw it away, sire,” said she; “throw it away.”

And she threw this cockade down the stairs, upon which trampled the feet of the whole escort which accompanied the king to his apartments.

This strange transition had extinguished all conjugal enthusiasm in the queen's breast. She looked around, but without apparent intention, for Monsieur de Charny, who was standing at his ordinary post near the king, with the stiff formality of a soldier.

“I thank you, monsieur,” she said to him, when their eyes met, after several moments of hesitation on the part of the count; “I thank you, monsieur. You have well fulfilled your promise.”

“To whom are you speaking?” inquired the king.

“To Monsieur de Charny,” said she, boldly.

“Yes, poor Charny! He had trouble enough to get near me. And Gilbert, — what has become of him? I do not see him,” added Louis.

The queen, who had become more cautious since the lesson of the afternoon, called out, —

“Come in to supper,” in order to change the conversation. “Monsieur de Charny,” pursued she, “find the Countess de Charny, and bring her with you. We will have a family supper.”

In this she acted as a queen. But she sighed on observing that Charny, who till then had appeared gloomy, at once became smiling and joyful.

CHAPTER XL.

FOULON.

BILLOT was in a state of perfect ecstasy.

He had taken the Bastile; he had restored Gilbert to liberty; he had been noticed by Lafayette, who called him by his name; and, finally, he had seen the burial of Foulon.

Few men in those days were as much execrated as Foulon. One only could in this respect have competed with him, and this was his son-in-law, Monsieur Berthier de Savigny.

They had both of them been singularly lucky the day following the capture of the Bastile. Foulon died on that day, and Berthier had managed to escape from Paris.

That which had raised to its climax the unpopularity of Foulon was, that on the retirement of Monsieur Necker, he had accepted the place of the virtuous Genevese, as he was then called, and had been comptroller-general during three days. And therefore was there much singing and dancing at his burial.

The people had at one time thought of taking the body out of the coffin, and hanging it; but Billot had jumped upon a post, and had made a speech on the respect due to the dead, and the hearse was allowed to continue on its way.

As to Pitou, he had become a perfect hero.

Pitou had become the friend of Monsieur Elie and Monsieur Hullin, who deigned to employ him to execute their commissions.

He was, besides, the confidant of Billot, — of Billot, who had been treated with distinction by Monsieur de Lafayette, as we have already said, and who sometimes employed him as

a police guard about his person, on account of his brawny shoulders, his herculean fists, and his indomitable courage.

Since the journey of the king to Paris, Gilbert, who had been, through Monsieur Necker, put in communication with the principal members of the National Assembly and the Municipality, was incessantly occupied with the education of the republic, still in its infancy.

He therefore neglected Billot and Pitou, who, neglected by him, threw themselves ardently into the meetings of the citizens, in the midst of which political discussions of transcendent interest were constantly agitated.

At length, one day, after Billot had employed three hours in giving his opinion to the electors as to the best mode of victualling Paris, and fatigued with his long speech, though proud of having played the orator, he was resting with delight, lulled by the monotonous voices of his successors, which he took good care not to listen to, Pitou came in, greatly agitated, and gliding like an eel through the Sessions Hall of the electors in the Hôtel de Ville, and in a palpitating tone, which contrasted greatly with the usual placidity of his enunciation,—

“Oh, Monsieur Billot!” said he, “dear Monsieur Billot!”

“Well, what is it?”

“Great news!”

“Good news?”

“Glorious news!”

“What is it, then?”

“You know that I had gone to the club of the Virtues, at the Fontainebleau barrier?”

“Yes, and what then?”

“Well, they spoke there of a most extraordinary event.”

“What was it?”

“Do you know that that villain Foulon passed himself off for dead, and carried it so far as to allow himself to be buried?”

“How! passed himself for dead? How say you! pretended to allow himself to be buried? Nonsense! He is dead enough; for was I not at his funeral?”

"Notwithstanding that, Monsieur Billot, he is still living."

"Living!"

"As much alive as you and I are."

"You are mad!"

"Dear Monsieur Billot, I am not mad. The traitor Foulon, the enemy of the people, the leech of France, the speculator, is not dead."

"But since I tell you he was buried after an apoplectic fit, since I tell you that I saw the funeral go by, and even that I prevented the people from dragging him out of his coffin to hang him?"

"And I have just seen him alive. Ah, what do you say to that?"

"You?"

"As plainly as I now see you, Monsieur Billot. It appears that it was one of his servants who died, and the villain gave him an aristocratic funeral. Oh, all is discovered! It was from fear of the vengeance of the people that he acted thus."

"Tell me all about it, Pitou."

"Come into the vestibule for a moment, then, Monsieur Billot. We shall be more at our ease there."

They left the hall, and went into the vestibule.

"First of all, we must know whether Monsieur Bailly is here."

"Go on with your story; he is here."

"Good! Well, I was at the club of the Virtues, listening to the speech of a patriot. Did n't he make grammatical faults! It was easily seen that he had not been educated by the Abbé Fortier."

"Go on, I tell you. A man may be a good patriot, and yet not be able to read or write."

"That is true," said Pitou. "Well, suddenly a man came in, completely out of breath. 'Victory!' cried he, 'Victory! Foulon was not dead! Foulon is still alive! I have discovered him, — I have found him!'

"Everybody there was like you, Father Billot. No one would believe him. Some said, 'How! Foulon?' 'Yes.' Others said, 'Pshaw! impossible!' And others, 'Well, while you were at it, you might as well have discovered his son-in-law, Berthier.'"

"Berthier!" cried Billot.

"Yes, Berthier de Savigny. Don't you recollect our intendant at Compiègne, the friend of Monsieur Isidor de Charny?"

"Undoubtedly! he who was always so proud with everybody, and so polite with Catherine?"

"Precisely," said Pitou; "one of those horrible contractors, a second leech to the French people, the execration of all human nature, the shame of the civilised world, as said the virtuous Loustalot."

"Well, go on, go on!" cried Billot.

"That is true," said Pitou, — "*ad eventum festina*, — which means to say, Monsieur Billot, 'Hasten to the winding up.' I shall proceed, then. A man, out of breath, comes running to the club of the Virtues, and shouts: 'I have found Foulon! I have found him.'"

"Thereupon followed a terrible cry."

"He was mistaken," said Billot, obstinately.

"He was not, for I have seen Foulon."

"You have seen him, Pitou?"

"With these two eyes. Wait a moment."

"I am waiting; but you make my blood boil."

"Ah, but listen. I am hot enough, too. I tell you that he had given it out that he was dead, and had one of his servants buried in his place. Fortunately, Providence was watching."

"Providence, indeed!" disdainfully exclaimed the Voltairean Billot.

"I intended to say, the nation," rejoined Pitou, with humility. "This good citizen, this patriot out of breath who announced the news to us, recognised him at Vitry, where he had concealed himself."

"Ah! ah!"

"Having recognised him, he denounced him, and the syndic, whose name is Monsieur Rappe, instantly arrested him."

"And what is the name of the brave patriot who had the courage to do all this?"

"Of informing against Foulon?"

"Yes."

"Well, his name is Monsieur Saint-Jean."

"Saint-Jean! Why, that is a lackey's name."

"And he was precisely the lackey of the villain Foulon. Aristocrat, you are rightly served. Why had you lackeys?"

"Pitou, you interest me," said Billot, going close to the narrator.

"You are very kind, Monsieur Billot. Well, then, here is Foulon denounced and arrested; they are bringing him to Paris. The informer had run on ahead to announce the news, and receive the reward for his denunciation; and sure enough, in a few moments afterwards Foulon arrived at the barrier."

"And it was there that you saw him?"

"Yes. He had a very queer look, I can tell you. They had twisted a bunch of stinging nettles round his neck, by way of cravat."

"What say you? stinging nettles? And what was that for?"

"Because it appears that he had said — rascal as he is! — that bread was for men, oats for horses, but that nettles were good enough for the people."

"Did he say that, the wretch?"

"Yes! by Heaven! he said so, Monsieur Billot."

"Good! there, now, you are swearing."

"Bah!" cried Pitou, with a swaggering air, "between military men! Well, they brought him along on foot, and the whole of the way they were giving him smashing blows in the back and on his head."

"Oh! oh!" cried Billot, somewhat less enthusiastic.

"It was very amusing," continued Pitou, "only that everybody could not get at him to give him a blow, seeing that there were ten thousand persons hooting after him."

"And after this?" asked Billot, who began to reflect.

"After that they took him to the president of the Saint-Marcel district, — a good patriot, you know."

"Yes, Monsieur Acloque."

"Cloque, — yes, that is it, — who ordered him to be taken to the Hôtel de Ville, seeing that he did not know what to do with him; so that you will soon see him."

"But how happens it that it is you who have come to announce this, and not the famous Saint-Jean?"

"Why, because my legs are six inches longer than his. He had set off before me, but I soon came up with and passed him. I wanted to inform you first, that you might inform Monsieur Bailly of it."

"What luck you have, Pitou!"

"I shall have much more than this to-morrow."

"And how can you tell that?"

"Because this same Saint-Jean, who denounced Monsieur Foulon, proposed a plan to catch Monsieur Berthier, who has run away."

"He knows, then, where he is?"

"Yes; it appears that he was their confidential man, this good Monsieur Saint-Jean, and that he received a great deal of money from Foulon and his son-in-law, who wished to bribe him."

"And he took the money?"

"Certainly, the money of an aristocrat is always good to take; but he said, 'A good patriot will not betray his nation for money.'"

"Yes," murmured Billot; "he betrays his masters, that is all. Do you know, Pitou, that your Monsieur Saint-Jean appears to me to be a worthless vagabond?"

"That is possible, but it matters not; they will take Monsieur Berthier as they have taken Master Foulon, and

they will hang them nose to nose. What horrid wry faces they will make, looking at each other, — hey?"

"And why should they be hanged?"

"Why, because they are vile rascals, and I detest them."

"What! Monsieur Berthier, who has been at the farm, — Monsieur Berthier, who, during his tours into the Isle-de-France, has drunk our milk, and eaten of our bread, and sent the gold buckles to Catherine from Paris? Oh, no, no! they shall not hang him."

"Bah!" repeated Pitou, ferociously, "he is an aristocrat, — a wheedling rascal!"

Billot looked at Pitou with stupefaction. Beneath the gaze of the farmer, Pitou blushed to the very whites of his eyes.

Suddenly, the worthy cultivator perceived Monsieur Bailly, who was going from the hall into his own cabinet; he rushed after him to inform him of the news.

But it was now for Billot in his turn to be treated with incredulity.

"Foulon! Foulon!" cried the mayor, "what folly!"

"Well, Monsieur Bailly, all I can say is, here is Pitou, who saw him."

"I saw him, Monsieur Mayor," said Pitou, placing his hand on his heart, and bowing. And he related to Monsieur Bailly all he had before related to Billot.

They observed that poor Bailly turned very pale; he at once understood the extent of the catastrophe.

"And Monsieur Acloque sends him here?" murmured he.

"Yes, Monsieur Mayor."

"But how is he sending him?"

"Oh, there is no occasion to be uneasy," said Pitou, who misunderstood the anxiety of Bailly; "there are plenty of people to guard the prisoner. He will not be carried off."

"Would to God he might be carried off!" murmured Bailly.

Then, turning to Pitou, —

"Plenty of people, — what mean you by that, my friend?"

"I mean plenty of people."

"People!"

"More than twenty thousand men, without counting the women," said Pitou, triumphantly.

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed Bailly. "Gentlemen, gentlemen electors!"

And he related to the electors all he had just heard.

While he was speaking, exclamations and cries of anguish burst forth from all present.

The silence of terror pervaded the hall, during which a confused, distant, indescribable noise assailed the ears of those assembled, like that produced by the rushing of blood to the head in attacks upon the brain.

"What is that?" inquired an elector.

"Why, the noise of the crowd, to be sure," replied another.

Suddenly a carriage was heard rolling rapidly across the square; it contained two armed men, who helped a third to alight from it, who was pale and trembling.

Foulon had at length become so exhausted by the ill usage he had experienced that he could no longer walk, and he had been lifted into a coach.

Behind the carriage, led on by Saint-Jean, who was more out of breath than ever, ran about a hundred young men, from sixteen to eighteen years of age, with haggard countenances and flaming eyes.

They cried, "Foulon! Foulon!" running almost as fast as the horses.

The two armed men were, however, some few steps in advance of them, which gave them the time to push Foulon into the Hôtel de Ville, and its doors were closed against the hoarse barkers from without.

"At last we have him here," said his guards to the electors, who were waiting at the top of the stairs. "By Heaven! it was not without trouble!"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried Foulon, trembling, "will you save me?"

"Ah! monsieur," replied Bailly, with a sigh, "you have been very culpable!"

"And yet, monsieur," said Foulon, entreatingly, his agitation increasing, "there will I hope be justice to defend me."

At this moment the exterior tumult was redoubled.

"Hide him quickly!" cried Bailly to those around him, "or —"

He turned to Foulon.

"Listen to me," said he; "the situation is serious enough for you to be consulted. Will you — perhaps it is not yet too late — will you endeavour to escape from the back part of the Hôtel de Ville?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Foulon; "I should be recognised, — massacred!"

"Do you prefer to remain here in the midst of us? I will do, and these gentlemen will do, all that is humanly possible to defend you; will you not, gentlemen?"

"We promise it," cried all the electors, with one voice.

"Oh! I prefer remaining with you, gentlemen. Gentlemen, do not abandon me!"

"I have told you, monsieur," replied Bailly, with dignity, "that we will do all that may be humanly possible to save you."

At that moment a frightful clamour arose from the square, ascended into the air, and invaded the Hôtel de Ville through the open windows.

"Do you hear? do you hear?" murmured Foulon, perfectly livid with terror.

In fact, the mob had rushed, howling and frightful to behold, from all the streets leading to the Hôtel de Ville, and above all from the Quai Pelletier, and the Rue de la Vannerie.

Bailly went to a window.

Knives, pikes, scythes, and muskets glistened in the sunshine. In less than ten minutes the vast square was filled with people. It was the whole of Foulon's train, of

which Pitou had spoken, and which had been increased by curious idlers, who, hearing a great noise, had run to the Place de Grève, as towards a common centre.

All these voices, and there were more than twenty thousand, cried incessantly, —

“Foulon! Foulon!”

Then it was seen that the hundred young men who had been the precursors of this furious mob, pointed out to this howling mass the gate by which Foulon had entered the building; this gate was instantly threatened, and they began to beat it down with the butt ends of their muskets and with crowbars.

Suddenly it flew open.

The guards of the Hôtel de Ville appeared, and advanced upon the assailants, who, in their first terror, retreated, and left a large open space in the front of the building.

This guard stationed itself upon the front steps, and presented a bold front to the crowd.

The officers, moreover, instead of threatening, harangued the crowd in friendly terms, and endeavoured to calm it by their protestations.

Bailly had become quite confused. It was the first time that the poor astronomer had found himself in opposition to the popular tempest.

“What is to be done?” demanded he of the electors; “what is to be done?”

“We must try him.”

“No trial can take place when under the intimidation of the mob,” said Bailly.

“Zounds!” exclaimed Billot, “have you not, then, men enough to defend you?”

“We have not two hundred men.”

“You must have a reinforcement, then?”

“Oh, if Monsieur Lafayette were but informed of this!”

“Well, send and inform him of it.”

“And who would venture to attempt it? Who could make his way through such a multitude?”

"I would," replied Billot.

And he was about to leave the hall.

Bailly stopped him.

"Madman!" cried he; "look at that ocean! You would be swallowed up even by one of its waves. If you wish to get to Monsieur de Lafayette, and even then I would not answer for your safety, go out by one of the back doors. Go!"

"'T is well!" tranquilly replied Billot.

And he darted out of the room with the swiftness of an arrow.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE FATHER-IN-LAW.

THE clamour, which kept on constantly increasing from the square, clearly proved that the exasperation of the mob was becoming greater. It was no longer hatred that they felt, it was abhorrence; they no longer merely threatened, they foamed.

The cries of "Down with Foulon! Death to Foulon!" crossed each other in the air, like projectiles in a bombardment. The crowd, which was still augmenting, pressed nearer to the entrance of the Hôtel de Ville, till they, as it may be said, almost suffocated the civic guards at their posts.

And already there began to circulate among the crowd, and to increase in violence, those rumours which are the precursors of violence.

These rumours no longer threatened Foulon only, but the electors who protected him.

"They have let the prisoner escape!" said some.

"Let us go in! let us go in!" said others.

"Let us set fire to the Hôtel de Ville!"

"Forward! forward!"

Bailly felt that, as Monsieur de Lafayette did not arrive, there was only one resource left to them.

And this was that the electors should themselves go down, mix in with the groups, and endeavour to pacify the most furious among them.

"Foulon! Foulon!"

Such was the incessant cry, the constant roaring of those furious waves.

A general assault was preparing; the walls could not have resisted it.

"Monsieur," said Bailly to Foulon, "if you do not show yourself to the crowd, they will believe that we have allowed you to escape; they will force the door, will come in here, and once here, should they find you, I can no longer be responsible for anything."

"Oh, I did not know that I was so much execrated!" exclaimed Foulon.

And, supported by Bailly, he dragged himself to the window.

A fearful cry resounded immediately on his presenting himself. The guards were driven back, the doors broken in; a torrent of men precipitated themselves up the staircase into the corridors, into the rooms, which were invaded in an instant.

Bailly threw around the prisoner all the guards who were within call, and then he began to harangue the crowd.

He wished to make these men understand that to assassinate might sometimes be doing justice, but that it was never an act of justice.

He succeeded, after having made the most strenuous efforts, after having twenty times perilled his own existence.

"Yes, yes!" cried the assailants, "let him be tried! let him be tried! but let him be hanged!"

They were at this point in the argument, when General de Lafayette reached the Hôtel de Ville, conducted there by Billot.

The sight of his tri-coloured plume, one of the first which had been worn, at once assuaged their anger, and the tumult ceased.

The commander-in-chief of the National Guard had the way cleared for him, and, addressing the crowd, repeated, though in more energetic terms, every argument that Bailly had endeavoured to enforce.

His speech produced a great effect on all those who were

near enough to hear it, and the cause of Foulon was completely gained in the electors' hall.

But on the square were twenty thousand furious people, who had not heard Monsieur de Lafayette, and who remained implacable in their frenzy.

"Come, now," said Lafayette at the conclusion of his oration, very naturally imagining that the effect he had produced on those who surrounded him had extended to all outside; "come, now, this man must be tried."

"Yes," cried the mob.

"And consequently I order that he be taken to prison," added Lafayette.

"To prison! to prison!" howled the mob.

At the same time the general made a sign to the guards of the Hôtel de Ville, who led the prisoner forward.

The crowd outside understood nothing of all that was going on, excepting that their prey was about to appear. They had not even an idea that any one had the slightest hope of disputing it with them.

They scented, if we may be permitted the expression, the odour of the human flesh which was descending the staircase.

Billot had placed himself at the window with several electors, whom Bailly also joined, in order to follow the prisoner with their eyes while he was crossing the square, escorted by the civic guards.

On the way, Foulon here and there addressed a few incoherent words to those around him, which, although they were protestations of confidence, clearly evinced the most profound and ill-disguised terror.

"Noble people," said he, while descending the staircase, "I fear nothing; I am in the midst of my fellow citizens."

And already bantering laughs and insults were being uttered around him, when suddenly he found himself outside of the gloomy archway at the top of the stone steps which led into the square.

Immediately one general cry, a cry of rage, a howling

threat, a roar of hatred, burst from twenty thousand lungs. On this explosion of the public feeling the guards conducting the prisoner are lifted from the ground, broken, dispersed; Foulon is seized by twenty powerful arms, raised above their shoulders, and carried into the fatal corner, under the lamp-post, ignoble and brutal instrument of the anger of the people, which they termed their justice.

Billot from his window saw all this, and cried out against it; the electors also did all they could to stimulate the guards, but they were powerless.

Lafayette, in despair, rushed out of the Hôtel de Ville, but he could not break through the first rank of that crowd, which spread out like an immense lake between him and the victim.

The mere spectators of this scene jumped upon posts, on window-sills, on every jutting part of a building, in order to gain a better view, and they encouraged by their savage shouts the frightful effervescence of the actors.

The latter were playing with their victim, as would a troop of tigers with an inoffensive prey.

They were disputing who should hang Foulon; at last they understood that, if they wished to enjoy his agony, it was necessary that their several functions should be agreed upon.

But for that he would have been torn to pieces.

Some of them raised up Foulon, who had no longer strength enough to cry out.

Others, who had taken off his cravat and torn his coat, placed a rope round his neck.

And others, who had climbed up the lamp-post, had handed to their companions below the rope which they put round the neck of the ex-minister.

For a moment they raised Foulon above their heads, and showed him thus to the crowd, — a rope twined round his neck, and his hands tied behind him.

Then when the crowd had had due time to contemplate the sufferer, when they had clapped their hands sufficiently,

the signal was given, and Foulon, pale and bleeding, was hoisted up to a level with the lantern, amid a hooting more terrible even than death.

All those who, up to that time, had not been able to see anything, then perceived the public enemy raised above the heads of the crowd.

New shouts were then heard; but these were against the executioners. Were they about to kill Foulon so expeditiously?

The executioners merely shrugged their shoulders, and pointed to the rope.

The rope was old; it could be seen to give way, strand by strand. The despairing movements which Foulon made in his agony at length broke the last strand; and Foulon, only half strangled, fell heavily upon the pavement.

He was only at the preface of his torments; he had only penetrated into the vestibule of death.

They all rushed towards the sufferer; they were perfectly secure with regard to him; there was no chance of his escaping them; in falling, he had broken his leg a little below the knee.

And yet some imprecations arose, imprecations which were unintelligible and calumnious; the executioners were accused, they were considered as clumsy and unskilful, — they who, on the contrary, had been so ingenious, they who had expressly chosen an old worn-out rope, in the hope that it would break.

A hope which the event, as has been related, had fully realised.

They made a knot in the rope, and again fixed it round the neck of the unhappy man, who, half dead, with haggard eyes looked around, endeavouring to discover whether, in that city, which is called the centre of the civilised universe, — whether one of the bayonets of that king of whom he was the minister, and who had a hundred thousand, would not be raised in his defence amid that horde of cannibals.

But there was nothing there to meet his eyes but hatred, but insult, but death.

"At least kill me at once, without making me endure these atrocious torments!" cried the despairing Foulon.

"Well, now," replied a jeering voice, "why should we abridge your torments? you have made ours last long enough."

"And besides," said another, "you have not yet had time enough to digest your nettles."

"Wait, wait a little," cried a third; "his son-in-law, Berthier, will be brought to him; there is room enough for him on the opposite lamp-post."

"We shall see what wry faces the father and son-in-law will make at each other," added another.

"Finish me! finish me at once!" cried the wretched man.

During this time, Bailly and Lafayette were begging, supplicating, exclaiming, and endeavouring to get through the crowd; suddenly Foulon was again hoisted by the rope, which again broke, and their prayers, their supplications, their agony, no less painful than that of the sufferer himself, was lost, confounded, and extinguished amid the universal laugh which accompanied this second fall.

Bailly and Lafayette, who, three days before, had been the sovereign arbiters of the will of six hundred thousand Parisians, — a child now would not listen to them, the people even murmured at them, they were in their way, they were interrupting this great spectacle.

Billot had vainly given them all the aid of his uncommon strength; the powerful athlete had knocked down twenty men, but in order to reach Foulon it would be necessary to knock down fifty, a hundred, two hundred, and his strength is exhausted; and when he pauses to wipe from his brow the perspiration and the blood which is streaming from it, Foulon is raised a third time to the pulley of the lamp-post.

This time they had taken compassion upon him, the rope was a new one.

At last, the condemned is dead; the victim no longer suffers.

Half a minute had sufficed to the crowd to assure itself that the vital spark was extinguished. And now that the tiger has killed, he may devour his prey.

The body, thrown from the top of the lamp-post, did not even fall to the ground; it was torn to pieces before it reached it.

The head was separated from the trunk in a second, and in another second raised on the end of a pike. It was very much in fashion in those days to carry the heads of one's enemies in that way.

At this sanguinary spectacle Bailly was horrified. That head appeared to him to be the head of the Medusa of ancient days.

Lafayette, pale, his drawn sword in his hand, with disgust repulsed the guards who had surrounded him, to excuse themselves for not having been the strongest.

Billot, stamping his feet with rage, and kicking right and left, like one of his own fiery Perche horses, returned into the Hôtel de Ville, that he might see no more of what was passing on that ensanguined square.

As to Pitou, his fieriness of popular vengeance was changed into a convulsive movement, and he had fled to the river's bank, where he closed his eyes and stopped his ears that he might neither see nor hear.

Consternation reigned in the Hôtel de Ville; the electors began to comprehend that they would never be able to direct the movements of the people but in the manner which should suit the people.

All at once, while the furious mob were amusing themselves with dragging the mutilated remains of Foulon through the gutters, a new cry, a new shout, rolling like distant thunder, was heard proceeding from the opposite side of the river.

A courier was seen galloping over the bridge. The news he was bringing was already known to the crowd. They had guessed it from the signs of their most skilful leaders, as a pack of hounds take up the scent from the inspiration of their finest nosed and best practised bloodhounds.

The crowd rushed to meet this courier, whom they surrounded; they scent that he has touched their new prey; they feel that he is going to speak of Monsieur Berthier.

And it was true.

Interrogated by ten thousand voices, all howling at once, the courier is compelled to reply to them.

"Monsieur Berthier de Savigny has been arrested at Compiègne."

Then he proceeds into the Hôtel de Ville, where he announces the same tidings to Lafayette and to Bailly.

"Good! good! I knew it," said Lafayette.

"We knew it," said Bailly, "and orders have been given that he should be kept there."

"Kept there?" repeated the courier.

"Undoubtedly; I have sent two commissaries with an escort."

"An escort of two hundred men, was it not?" said an elector; "it is more than sufficient."

"Gentlemen," replied the courier, "this is precisely what I was sent to tell you. The escort has been dispersed, and the prisoner carried off by the multitude."

"Carried off?" exclaimed Lafayette. "Has the escort allowed the prisoner to be carried off?"

"Do not blame them, general; all that it was possible to do, they did."

"But Monsieur Berthier?" anxiously inquired Bailly.

"They are bringing him to Paris, and he is at Bourget by this time."

"But should they bring him here," cried Bailly, "he is lost."

"Quick! quick!" cried Lafayette, "five hundred men to Bourget. Let the commissioners and Monsieur Berthier

stop there, — let them stop there. During the night we will consider what is to be done.”

“But who would venture to undertake such a commission?” said the courier, who was looking with terror at that waving sea of heads, every wave of which sent forth its threatening roar.

“I will!” cried Billot: “at least, I will save *him*.”

“But you would perish in the attempt,” cried the courier; “the road is black with people.”

“I will go nevertheless,” said the farmer.

“It is useless now,” murmured Bailly, who had been listening to the noises from without. “Hush! Do you not hear that?”

They then heard, from the direction of the Porte Saint-Martin, a rushing noise like that of the sea when beating over the shingles on a beach.

“It is too late,” said Lafayette.

“They are coming! they are coming!” murmured the courier. “Do you not hear them?”

“A regiment! a regiment!” cried Lafayette, with that generous ebullition of humanity which was the most brilliant feature of his character.

“What! By God’s death!” exclaimed Bailly, who swore perhaps for the first time in his life, “you seem to forget that our army — ours! — is precisely that crowd whom you wish to fight.”

And he hid his face in his hands.

The shouts which had been heard in the distance were re-echoed by the people in the streets, and thus communicated to the crowd upon the square with the rapidity of a train of gunpowder.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SON-IN-LAW.

THEN those who were insulting the remains of Foulon left their sanguinary game, to rush forward in pursuit of a new vengeance.

The adjacent streets immediately disgorged a large proportion of that howling mob, who hurried from the square with upraised knives and menacing gestures, towards the Rue Saint-Martin, to meet the new funeral procession.

The junction having been accomplished, both parties were equally eager to return to the square.

A strange scene then ensued.

Some of those ingenious persons whom we have seen upon the Place de Grève presented to the son-in-law the head of Foulon on the end of a pike.

Monsieur Berthier was coming along the Rue Saint-Martin. They were then just crossing the Rue Saint-Merry.

He was in his own cabriolet, a vehicle which at that period was considered as eminently aristocratic, — a vehicle which more than any other excited popular animadversion; for the people had so often complained of the reckless rapidity with which they were driven, either by young fops or dancing girls who drove themselves, and which, drawn by a fiery horse, sometimes ran over, but always splashed, the unfortunate pedestrian.

Berthier, in the midst of all the shouts, the hootings, and the threats of the infuriate mob, was talking tranquilly with the elector Rivière, the commissary sent to Compiègne to save him, but who, being abandoned by his colleague, had with much difficulty saved himself.

The people had begun with the cabriolet; they had turned off the head of it, so that Berthier and his companion were

completely exposed, not only to the view, but to the blows, of the populace.

As they moved onwards, his misdeeds were related to him, commented upon, and exaggerated by the popular fury.

"He wished to starve Paris," cried one.

"He had the rye and wheat cut when it was green; and then, a rise in the price of corn having taken place, he realised enormous sums."

"Not only did he do that," said they, "which was enough in itself, but he was conspiring."

In searching him they had found a pocket-book. In this pocket-book were incendiary letters, orders for massacre, proof that ten thousand cartridges had been distributed to his agents. So said the crowd.

These were all monstrous absurdities; but, as is well known, the mob, when in a paroxysm of rage, gives out as positive facts the most absurd improbabilities.

The person whom they accused of all this was a man who was still young, not being more than from thirty to thirty-two years of age, elegantly dressed, almost smiling, though greeted every moment by injurious epithets and even blows. He looked with perfect indifference at the infamous placards which were held up to him, and without affectation continued his conversation with Rivière.

Two men, irritated at his assurance, had wished to terrify him, and to diminish this self-confidence. They had mounted on the steps on each side of the cabriolet, and each of them placed the point of his bayonet on Berthier's breast.

But Berthier, brave even to temerity, was not to be moved by such a trifle. He had continued to converse with the elector, as if those two muskets were but inoffensive accessories to the cabriolet.

The mob, profoundly exasperated by this disdain, which formed so complete a contrast to the terror of Foulon,—the mob roared around the vehicle, and waited with impatience for the moment when, instead of a threat, they might inflict a wound.

It was then that Berthier had fixed his eyes on a mis-

shapen and bloody object, which was held up and danced before him, and which he suddenly recognised as the head of his father-in-law, and which the ruffians who bore it held down close to his lips.

They wished to make him kiss it.

Monsieur Rivière, indignant at this brutality, pushed the pike away with his hand.

Berthier thanked him by a gesture, and did not even deign to turn round to follow this hideous trophy with his eyes. The executioners carried it behind the cabriolet, holding it over Berthier's head.

They thus arrived on the Place de Grève, and the prisoner, after unheard of efforts by the civic guards, who had been reassembled in some order, was delivered into the hands of the electors of the Hôtel de Ville.

A dangerous charge, a fearful responsibility, which made Lafayette once more turn pale, and poor Bailly's heart swell almost to breaking.

The mob, after having hacked away for awhile at the cabriolet, which had been left at the foot of the front steps, again placed itself in the most advantageous positions, kept guard on all the issues from the building, made all its preparations, and placed new ropes in the pulleys of the lanterns.

Billot, at the sight of Berthier, who was tranquilly ascending the great staircase of the Hôtel de Ville, tore his hair, and could not restrain himself from weeping bitterly.

Pitou, who had left the river's bank, and had come on the quay again when he thought that Foulon's execution had been accomplished, — Pitou, terrified, notwithstanding his hatred for Monsieur Berthier, guilty in his eyes not only of all the mob reproached him with, but also of having given gold buckles to Mademoiselle Catherine, — Pitou crouched down sobbing behind a bench.

During this time Berthier had entered the grand Hall of Council as coolly as if all the tumult had reference to some other person, and quietly conversed with the electors.

He knew the greater portion of them, and was even intimate with some of them.

The latter avoided him with the instinctive terror with which timid minds are inspired by the contact of an unpopular man.

Therefore Berthier soon found himself almost alone with Bailly and Lafayette.

He made them relate to him all the particulars of Foulon's death. Then, shrugging up his shoulders, —

"Yes," said he, "I can understand it. They hate us, because we are the instruments with which royalty has tortured the people."

"Great crimes are laid at your door, monsieur," said Bailly, austere.

"Monsieur," replied Berthier, "if I had committed all the crimes with which I am reproached, I should be less or more than man, — a wild beast or a demon. But I shall be tried, I presume, and then the truth will be ascertained."

"Undoubtedly," said Bailly.

"Well, then," rejoined Berthier, "that is all I desire. They have my correspondence, and it will be seen whose orders I have obeyed; and the responsibility will fall on those to whom it rightly appertains."

The electors cast their eyes upon the square, from which arose the most frightful clamour.

Berthier understood this mute reply.

Then Billot, pushing through the throng which surrounded Bailly, went up to the intendant, and, offering him his huge honest hand, —

"Good day, Monsieur de Sauvigny," said he to him.

"How! — is that you, Billot?" cried Berthier, laughing, and grasping firmly the hand which was held out to him. "What, you have come to Paris to join in these disturbances, you, my worthy farmer, who used to sell your wheat so well in the markets at Villers-Cotterêts, Crépy, and Soissons?"

Billot, notwithstanding his democratic tendencies, could not but admire the tranquillity of this man, who could thus smile at a moment when his life was hanging by a thread.

"Install yourselves, gentlemen," said Bailly to the elec-

tors; "we must now proceed to the examination of the charges against the accused."

"Be it so," said Berthier: "but I must warn you of one thing, gentlemen, and that is, that I am perfectly exhausted. For the last two days I have not slept. To-day, from Compiègne to Paris, I have been pushed about, beaten, dragged along. When I asked for something to eat they offered me hay, which is not excessively refreshing. Therefore, give me some place where I can sleep, if it be only for an hour."

At that moment Lafayette left the room for a short time, to ascertain the state of matters outside. He returned more dispirited than ever.

"My dear Bailly," said he to the mayor, "exasperation is at its height; to keep Monsieur Berthier here would be exposing ourselves to a siege. To defend the Hôtel de Ville would be giving these furious madmen the pretext which they wish. Not to defend the Hôtel de Ville would be acquiring the habit of yielding every time we are attacked."

During this time, Berthier had sat down, and then stretched himself at full length upon a bench.

He was preparing himself to sleep.

The desperate howls from below were audible to him, for he was near an open window; but they did not disturb him. His countenance retained the serenity of a man who forgets all, to allow sleep to weigh down his eyelids.

Bailly was deliberating with the electors and Lafayette.

Billot had his eyes fixed upon Berthier.

Lafayette was rapidly taking the votes of the electors; after which, addressing the prisoner, who was beginning to slumber, —

"Monsieur," said he, "be pleased to get ready."

Berthier heaved a sigh, then, raising himself on his elbow, —

"Ready for what?" he inquired.

"These gentlemen have decided that you are to be transferred to the Abbaye."

"To the Abbaye? Well, be it so," said the intendant. "But," continued he, looking at the confused electors, and whose confusion he readily comprehended, — "but, *one way or the other*, let us finish this."

And an explosion of anger and furious impatience long restrained burst forth from the square.

"No, gentlemen, no," exclaimed Lafayette, "we cannot allow him to depart at this moment."

Bailly's kind heart and undaunted courage impelled him to come to a sudden resolution. He went down into the square with two of the electors, and ordered silence.

The people knew as well as he did what he was about to say; but, as they were fully bent on committing another crime, they would not even listen to a reproach; and as Bailly was opening his lips to speak, a deafening clamour arose from the mob, drowning his voice before a single word could be heard.

Bailly, seeing that it would be impossible for him to proffer even a syllable, returned into the Hôtel de Ville, pursued by cries of "Berthier! Berthier!"

But other cries resounded in the midst of these, — cries similar to those shrill notes which suddenly are heard in the choruses of demons by Weber or by Meyerbeer, — and these were, "To the lantern! to the lantern!"

On seeing Bailly come back pale and disheartened, Lafayette rushed out in his turn. He is young, he is ardent, he is beloved. That which the old man could not effect, his popularity being but of yesterday, he, Lafayette, he, the friend of Washington and of Necker, would undoubtedly obtain at the first word.

But in vain was it that the people's general threw himself into the most furious groups. In vain did he speak in the name of justice and humanity. In vain was it that, recognising, or feigning to recognise, certain leaders of the people, did he supplicate them, grasping their hands, and endeavouring to allay their fury. Not one of his words was listened to; not one of his gestures was understood; not one of the tears he shed was seen.

Repulsed step by step, he threw himself upon his knees on the *perron* of the Hôtel de Ville, conjuring these tigers, whom he called his fellow citizens, not to dishonour the nation, not to dishonour themselves, not to elevate to the rank of martyrs guilty men, to whom the law would award a degrading death, which degradation was a portion of their punishment.

As he persisted in his entreaties, he was at last personally threatened in his turn; but he defied all threats. Some of these furious wretches drew their knives, and raised them as if to strike.

He bared his breast to their blows, and their weapons were instantly lowered.

But if they thus threatened Lafayette, the threat was still more serious to Berthier.

Lafayette, thus overcome, re-entered the Hôtel de Ville as Bailly had done.

The electors had all seen Lafayette vainly contending against the tempest. Their last rampart was overthrown.

They decided that the guard of the Hôtel de Ville should at once conduct Berthier to the Abbaye.

It was sending Berthier to certain death.

"Come then," said Berthier, when this decision was announced.

And eying all these men with withering contempt, he took his station in the centre of the guards, after having thanked Bailly and Lafayette for their exertions, and in his turn, held out his hand to Billot.

Bailly turned away his face to conceal his tears, — Lafayette to conceal his indignation.

Berthier descended the staircase with the same firm step with which he had ascended it.

At the moment that he appeared on the *perron*, a furious howl assailed him, making even the stone step on which he had placed his foot tremble beneath him.

But he, disdainful and impassible, looked at all those flashing eyes calmly and unflinchingly, and, shrugging his shoulders, pronounced these words: —

“What a fantastic people! What is there to make them howl thus?”

He had scarcely uttered these words, when he was seized upon by the foremost of the mob. They had rushed on to the *perron* itself, and clutched him, though surrounded by his guards. Their iron hands dragged him along. He lost his footing, and fell into the arms of his enemies, who in a second dispersed his escort.

Then an irresistible tide impelled the prisoner over the same path, stained with blood, which Foulon had been dragged over only two hours before.

A man was already seated astride the fatal lamp, holding a rope in his hand.

But another man had clung to Berthier, and this man was dealing out with fury and delirium blows and imprecations on the brutal executioners.

He continually cried, —

“You shall not have him! You shall not kill him!”

This man was Billot, whom despair had driven mad, and mad as twenty madmen.

To some he shrieked, —

“I am one of the conquerors of the Bastile!”

And some of those who recognised him became less furious in their attack.

To others he said, —

“Let him be fairly tried; I will be responsible for him. If he is allowed to escape, you shall hang me in his stead.”

Poor Billot! poor worthy man! The whirlwind swept him away, he and Berthier, as the water-spout carries away a feather or a straw in its vast spirals.

He moved on without perceiving anything; he had reached the fatal spot.

The thunderbolt is less swift.

Berthier, who had been dragged along backwards, — Berthier, whom they had raised up, seeing that they stopped, raised his eyes and perceived the infamous, degrading halter swinging above his head.

By an effort as violent as it was unexpected, he tore himself from the grasp of those who held him, snatched a musket from the hands of a national guard, and inflicted several wounds on his self-appointed executioners with his bayonet.

But in a second a thousand blows were aimed at him from behind. He fell, and a thousand other blows from the ruffians who encircled him rained down upon him.

Billot had disappeared beneath the feet of the assassins.

Berthier had not time to suffer; his life's blood and his soul rushed at once from his body through a thousand gaping wounds.

Then Billot was witness to a spectacle more hideous than he had yet seen. He saw a fiend plunge his hand into the open breast of the corpse, and tear out the still smoking heart.

Then, sticking this heart on the point of his sabre, he held it above the heads of the shouting mob, which opened before him as he advanced, and he carried it into the Hôtel de Ville, and laid it on the table of the grand council, where the electors held their sessions.

Billot, that man of iron nerve, could not support this frightful sight; he fell fainting against a post at about ten paces from the fatal lantern.

Lafayette, on seeing this infamous insult offered to his authority, offered to the revolution which he directed, or rather which he had believed he should direct, — Lafayette broke his sword, and threw it at the faces of the assassins.

Pitou ran to pick up the farmer, carried him off in his arms, whispering into his ear, —

"Billot! Father Billot! take care; if they see that you are fainting, they will take you for his accomplice, and will kill you too. That would be a pity, — so good a patriot!"

And thereupon he dragged him towards the river, concealing him as well as he was able from the inquisitive looks of some zealous patriots who were murmuring.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BILLOT BEGINS TO PERCEIVE THAT ALL IS NOT ROSES IN REVOLUTIONS.

BILLOT, who, conjointly with Pitou, had been engaged in all the glorious libations, began to perceive that the cup was becoming bitter.

When he had completely recovered his senses from the refreshing breezes on the river's banks, —

"Monsieur Billot," said Pitou to him, "I regret Villers-Cotterêts; do not you?"

These words, like the refreshing balm of calmness and virtue, aroused the farmer, whose vigour returned to him, and he pushed through the crowd to get away at once from the scene of butchery.

"Come," said he to Pitou, "you are right."

And he at once determined on going to find Gilbert, who was residing at Versailles, but who, without having revisited the queen after the journey of the king to Paris, had become the right hand of Necker, who had been re-appointed minister, and was endeavouring to organise property by generalising poverty.

Pitou had, as usual, followed Billot.

Both of them were admitted into the study in which the doctor was writing.

"Doctor," said Billot, "I am going to return to my farm."

"And why so?" inquired Gilbert.

"Because I hate Paris."

"Ah, yes! I understand," coldly observed Gilbert; "you are tired."

"Worn out."

"You no longer like the revolution?"

"I should like to see it ended."

Gilbert smiled sorrowfully.

"It is only now beginning," he rejoined.

"Oh!" exclaimed Billot.

"That astonishes you, Billot?" asked Gilbert.

"What astonishes me the most is your perfect coolness."

"My friend," said Gilbert to him, "do you know whence my coolness proceeds?"

"It can only proceed from a firm conviction."

"Guess what that conviction is?"

"That all will end well."

Gilbert smiled still more gloomily than the first time.

"No; on the contrary, from the conviction that all will end badly."

Billot cried out with astonishment.

As to Pitou, he opened his eyes to an enormous width; he thought the argument altogether illogical.

"Let us hear," said Billot, "let us hear; for it seems to me that I do not rightly understand you."

"Take a chair, Billot," said Gilbert, "and sit down close to me."

Billot did as he was ordered.

"Closer, closer still, that no one may hear but yourself."

"And I, Monsieur Gilbert?" said Pitou, timidly, making a move towards the door, as if he thought the doctor wished him to withdraw.

"Oh, no, stay here," replied the doctor. "You are young; listen."

Pitou opened his ears, as he had done his eyes, to their fullest extent, and seated himself on the ground at Father Billot's feet.

This council was a singular spectacle, which was thus held in Gilbert's study, near a table heaped up with letters, documents, new pamphlets, and newspapers; and within four steps of a door which was besieged by a swarm of

petitioners, or people having some grievance to complain of. These people were all kept in order by an old clerk, who was almost blind, and had lost an arm.

"I am all attention," said Billot. "Now explain yourself, my master, and tell us how it is that all will finish badly."

"I will tell you, Billot. Do you see what I am doing at this moment, my friend?"

"You are writing lines."

"But the meaning of those lines, Billot?"

"How would you have me guess that, when you know that I cannot even read them?"

Pitou timidly raised his head a little above the table, and cast his eyes on the paper which was lying before the doctor.

"They are figures," said he.

"That is true; they are figures, and which are at once the salvation and ruin of France."

"Well, now!" exclaimed Billot.

"Well, now! well, now!" repeated Pitou.

"These figures, when they are presented to-morrow," continued the doctor, "will go to the king's palace, to the mansions of the nobility, and to the cottage of the poor man, to demand of all of them one quarter of their income."

"Hey?" ejaculated Billot.

"Oh, my poor Aunt Angelique!" cried Pitou; "what a wry face she will make!"

"What say you to this, my worthy friend?" said Gilbert. "People make revolutions, do they not? Well, they must pay for them."

"Perfectly just!" heroically replied Billot. "Well, be it so; it will be paid."

"Oh, you are a man who is already convinced, and there is nothing to astonish me in your answers; but those who are not convinced?"

"Those who are not so?"

"Yes; what will they do?"

"They will resist!" replied Billot, and in a tone which signified that he would resist energetically if he were required to pay a quarter of his income to accomplish a work which was contrary to his convictions.

"Then there would be a conflict," said Gilbert.

"But the majority?" said Billot.

"Conclude your sentence, my friend."

"The majority is there to make known its will."

"Then there would be aggression."

Billot looked at Gilbert, at first doubtingly, and then a ray of intelligence sparkled in his eye.

"Hold, Billot!" said the doctor, "I know what you are about to say to me. The nobility and the clergy possess everything, do they not?"

"That is undoubted," replied Billot; "and therefore the convents —"

"The convents?"

"The convents overflow with riches."

"*Notum certumque*," grumbled Pitou.

"The nobles do not pay in proportion to their income. Thus I, a farmer, pay more than twice the amount of taxes paid by my neighbours, the three brothers De Charny, who have between them an income of two hundred thousand francs."

"But, let us see," continued Gilbert. "Do you believe that the nobles and the priests are less Frenchmen than you are?"

Pitou pricked up his ears at this proposition, which sounded somewhat heretical at the time, when patriotism was calculated by the strength of elbows on the Place de Grève.

"You do not believe a word of it, do you, my friend? You cannot imagine that these nobles and priests, who absorb everything, and give back nothing, are as good patriots as you are?"

"That is true."

"An error, my dear friend, an error. They are even better, and I will prove it to you."

"Oh! that, for example, I deny."

"On account of their privileges, is it not?"

"Zounds! yes."

"Wait a moment."

"Oh, I can wait!"

"Well, then, I certify to you, Billot, that in three days from this time the person who will have the most privileges in France will be the man who possesses nothing."

"Then I shall be that person," said Pitou, gravely.

"Well, yes, it will be you."

"But how can that be?"

"Listen to me, Billot. These nobles and these ecclesiastics, whom you accuse of egotism, are just beginning to be seized with that fever of patriotism which is about to make the tour of France. At this moment they are assembled like so many sheep on the edge of the ditch; they are deliberating; the boldest of them will be the first to leap over it; and this will happen to-morrow, perhaps to-night; and after him, the rest will jump it."

"What is the meaning of that, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"It means to say that, voluntarily abandoning their prerogatives, feudal lords will liberate their peasants, proprietors of estates their farms and the rents due to them, the dove-cote lords their pigeons."

"Oh! oh!" ejaculated Pitou, with amazement; "you think they will give up all that?"

"Oh," cried Billot, suddenly catching the idea, "that will be splendid liberty indeed!"

"Well, then; and after that, when we shall all be free, what shall we do next?"

"The deuce!" cried Billot, somewhat embarrassed; "what shall be done next? Why, we shall see!"

"Ah, there is the great word!" exclaimed Gilbert: "*we shall see!*"

He rose from his chair with a gloomy brow, and walked

up and down the room for a few minutes; then, returning to the farmer, whose hand he seized with a violence which seemed almost a threat,—

“Yes,” said he, “we shall see! We shall all see, — you, as I shall; he, as you and I shall. And that is precisely what I was reflecting on just now, when you observed that composure which so much surprised you.”

“You terrify me. The people united, embracing each other, forming themselves into one mass to insure their general prosperity, — can that be a subject which renders you gloomy, Monsieur Gilbert?”

The latter shrugged his shoulders.

“Then,” said Billot, questioning in his turn, “what will you say of yourself if you now doubt, after having prepared everything in the Old World by giving liberty to the New?”

“Billot,” rejoined Gilbert, “you have just, without at all suspecting it, uttered a word which is the solution of the enigma, — a word which Lafayette has uttered, and which no one, beginning with himself perhaps, fully understands. Yes, we have given liberty to the New World.”

“You, and Frenchmen too! That is magnificent.”

“It is magnificent, but it will cost us dear,” said Gilbert, sorrowfully.

“Pooh! the money is spent, the bill is paid,” said Billot, joyously. “A little gold, a great deal of blood, and the debt is liquidated.”

“Blind enthusiast!” said Gilbert, “who sees not in this dawning in the west the germ of ruin to us all! Alas! why do I accuse them when I did not see more clearly than they? The having given liberty to the New World, I fear, I fear greatly, was totally ruining the old one.”

“*Rerum novus nascitur ordo!*” exclaimed Pitou, with great revolutionary self-possession.

“Silence, child,” said Gilbert.

“Was it, then, more difficult to overcome the English, than it is now to quiet the French?” asked Billot.

"A new world," repeated Gilbert; "that is to say, a vast open space, a clear table to work upon; no laws, but no abuses; no ideas, but no prejudices. In France, thirty thousand square leagues of territory for thirty millions of people; that is to say, should the space be equally divided, scarcely room for a cradle or a grave for each. Out yonder, in America, two hundred thousand square leagues for three millions of persons; frontiers which are ideal, for they border on the desert, which is to say immensity. In those two hundred thousand leagues, navigable rivers having a course of a thousand leagues; virgin forests, of which God alone knows the limits; that is to say, all the elements of life, of civilisation, and of a brilliant future. Oh, how easy it is, Billot, when a man is called Lafayette, and is accustomed to wield a sword! when a man is called Washington, and is accustomed to reflect deeply!—how easy is it to combat against walls of wood, of earth, of stone, of human flesh! But when, instead of founding, it is necessary to destroy; when we see in the old order of things that we are obliged to attack walls of bygone, crumbling ideas, and behind the ruins even of these walls that crowds of people and of interests still take refuge; when, after having found the idea, we find that, in order to make the people adopt it, it will be necessary, perhaps, to decimate that people, from the old who remember down to the child who has still to learn; from the recollection which is the monument down to the instinct which is the germ of it; then, oh, then, Billot! it is a task which will make all those shudder who can see behind the horizon. I am far-sighted, Billot, and I shudder."

"Pardon me, monsieur," said Billot, with his sound good sense; "you accused me, a short time since, of hating the revolution, and now you are making it execrable to me."

"But have I told you that I renounce it?"

"*Errare humanum est,*" murmured Pitou, "*sed perseverare diabolicum.*"

And he drew his feet towards him with his hands.

"I shall, however, persevere," continued Gilbert, "for, although I see the obstacle, I can perceive the end, and that end is splendid, Billot. It is not only the liberty of France that I am dreaming of, but it is the liberty of the whole world; it is not physical equality, but it is equality before the laws, — equality of rights; it is not the fraternity of our own citizens, but fraternity between all nations. I may be losing my own soul, my body may perhaps perish in the struggle," continued Gilbert, in a melancholy tone, "but it matters not; the soldier who is sent to the assault of a fortress, sees the cannon on its ramparts, sees the balls with which they are loaded, sees the match placed near the touchhole; he sees even more than this, he sees the direction in which they are pointed, he feels that this piece of black iron may pass through his own breast; but he still rushes onward, the fortress must be taken. Well, we are all soldiers, Father Billot. Forward, then! and over the heaps of our dead bodies may one day march the generations of which this boy now present is the advanced guard."

"I do not really know why you despair, Monsieur Gilbert. Is it because an unfortunate man was this day murdered on the Place de Grève?"

"And why were you, then, so much horrified? Go, then, Billot, and cut throats also."

"Oh! what are you now saying, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"Zounds! a man should be consistent. You came here, all pale, all trembling, — you, who are so brave, so strong, — and you said to me, 'I am tired out.' I laughed in your face, Billot; and now that I explain to you why you were pale, why you were worn out, it is you who laugh at me in turn."

"Speak! speak! but, first of all, give me the hope that I shall return cured, consoled, to my fields."

"Your fields! Listen to me, Billot, — all our hope is there. The country, — a sleeping revolution, which wakes

up once in a thousand years, and gives royalty the vertigo every time it awakens, — the country will wake up in its turn when the day shall come for purchasing or conquering those wrongly acquired territories of which you just now spoke, and with which the nobility and clergy are gorged, even to choking. But to urge on the country to a harvest of ideas, it will be necessary to urge on the countrymen to the conquest of the soil. Man by becoming a proprietor becomes free; and in becoming free, he becomes a better man. To us, then, privileged labourers, to whom God has consented that the veil of the future shall be raised, — to us, then, the fearful work, which, after giving liberty to the people, shall give them the property of the soil. Here, Billot, will be a good work, and a sorry recompense, perhaps; but an active, powerful work, full of joys and vexations, of glory and calumny. The country is still lulled in a dull, impotent slumber, but it awaits only to be awakened by our summons, and that new dawn shall be our work. When once the country is awakened, the sanguinary portion of our labours will be terminated, and its peaceable labours, the labours of the country, will commence."

"What, then, do you now advise that I should do, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"If you wish to be useful to your country, to the nation, to your brother men, to the world, remain here, Billot; take a hammer and work in this Vulcan's furnace, which is forging thunders for the whole world."

"Remain here to see men butchered, and perhaps at last learn to butcher them myself?"

"How so?" said Gilbert, with a faint smile. "You, Billot, become a murderer! What is it you are saying?"

"I say that should I remain here, as you request me," cried Billot, trembling with agitation, — "I say that the first man whom I shall see attaching a rope to a lamp-post, I will hang that man with these my hands."

Gilbert's smile became more positive.

"Well, now," said he, "I find you understand me, and now you also are a murderer."

"Yes; a murderer of vile wretches."

"Tell me, Billot, you have seen De Losme, De Launay, De Flesselles, Foulon, and Berthier slaughtered?"

"Yes."

"What epithet did those who slaughtered them apply to them?"

"They called them wretches."

"Oh! that is true," said Pitou; "they did call them wretches."

"Yes; but it is I who am right, and not they," rejoined Billot.

"You will be in the right," said Gilbert, "if you hang them; but in the wrong if they hang you."

Billot hung down his head under this heavy blow; then suddenly raising it again, with dignity, —

"Will you venture to maintain," said he, "that those who assassinate defenceless men, and who are under the safeguard of public honour, — will you maintain that they are as good Frenchmen as I am?"

"Ah!" said Gilbert, "that is quite another question. Yes, in France we have several sorts of Frenchmen. First of all, we have the people, to which Pitou belongs, to which you belong, to which I belong; then we have the French clergy, and then the French nobility. Three classes of Frenchmen in France, each French in his own point of view, — that is to say, as regards their interests, — and this without counting the king of France, who is also a Frenchman in his way. Ah! Billot, here you see in these different modes of all these Frenchmen considering themselves French, here is the real secret of the revolution. You will be a Frenchman in your own way, the Abbé Maury will be a Frenchman in his way, Mirabeau will be a Frenchman in a mode that differs from that of the Abbé Maury, and the king will be a Frenchman in another way than that of Mirabeau. Well, Billot, my excellent friend, thou man of

upright heart and sound judgment, you have just entered upon the second part of the question which I am now engaged upon. Do me the pleasure, Billot, to cast your eyes on this."

And Gilbert presented a printed paper to the farmer.

"What is this?" asked Billot, taking the paper.

"Read."

"Why, you know full well that I cannot read."

"Tell Pitou to read it then."

Pitou rose, and, standing on tiptoe, looked at the paper over the farmer's shoulder.

"That is not French," said he; "it is not Latin, neither is it Greek."

"It is English," replied Gilbert.

"I do not know English," said Pitou, proudly.

"I do," said Gilbert, "and I will translate that paper to you; but, in the first place, read the signature."

"P I T T," spelt Pitou; "what does P I T T mean?"

"I will explain it to you," replied Gilbert.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PITTS.

"PITT," rejoined Gilbert, "is the son of Pitt."

"Well, now," cried Pitou, "that is just as we have it in the Bible. There is then Pitt the first and Pitt the second?"

"Yes; and Pitt the first, my friends, — listen attentively to what I am going to tell you —"

"We are listening," replied Billot and Pitou at the same moment.

"This Pitt the first was during thirty years the sworn enemy of France; he combated, in the retirement of his cabinet, to which he was nailed by the gout, Montcalm and Vaudreuil in America, the Bailly de Suffren and D'Estaing on the seas, Noailles and Broglie on the Continent. This Pitt the first made it a principle with him that it was necessary to destroy the influence which France had gained over the whole of Europe. During thirty years he reconquered from us one by one all our colonies, one by one all our factories, the whole of our possessions in the East Indies, a hundred leagues of territory in Canada; and then, when he saw that France was three fourths ruined, he brings forward his son to ruin her altogether."

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Billot, evidently much interested, "so that the Pitt we have now —"

"Precisely," replied Gilbert; "he is the son of the Pitt whom we have had, and whom you already know, Father Billot, whom Pitou knows, whom all the universe knows, and this Pitt junior was thirty years old this last May."

"Thirty years old?"

"Yes; you see that he has well employed his time, my friends. Notwithstanding his youth, he has now governed England for seven years; seven years has he put in practice the theory of his father."

"Well, then, we are likely to have him for a long time yet," said Billot.

"And it is the more probable that the vital qualities are very tenacious among the Pitts. Let me give you a proof of it."

Pitou and Billot indicated by a motion of their heads that they were listening with the greatest attention.

Gilbert continued: —

"In 1778, the father of our enemy was dying; his physicians announced to him that his life was merely hanging by a thread, and that the slightest effort would break that thread. The English Parliament was then debating on the question of abandoning the American Colonies and yielding to their desire for independence, in order to put a stop to the war, which threatened, fomented as it was by the French, to swallow up the riches and all the soldiers of Great Britain. It was at the moment when Louis XVI., our good king, he on whom the whole nation has just conferred the title of 'Father of French Liberty,' had solemnly recognised the independence of America; and on the fields of battle in that country, and in their councils, the swords and genius of the French had obtained the mastery. England had offered to Washington — that is to say, to the chief of the insurgents — the recognition of American nationality, on condition that the new nation should ally itself with England against France."

"But," said Billot, "it appears to me this proposition was not a decent one to be either offered or accepted."

"My dear Billot, this is what is called diplomacy, and in the political world these sorts of ideas are much admired. Well, Billot, however immoral you may consider the matter, in spite of Washington, the most faithful of men, Americans would have been found to accede to this degrading concession

to England. But Lord Chatham, the father of Pitt, the man who had been given over by the physicians, — this dying man, this phantom, who was already standing knee-deep in the grave, — this Chatham, who, it might be thought, could have desired naught more on this earth than repose before sleeping beneath his monument, — this feeble old man determined on appearing in the Parliament where the question was about to be discussed.

"On entering the House of Lords, he was leaning on the one side on the arm of his son, William Pitt, then only nineteen years of age, and on the other on that of his son-in-law, Lord Mahon. He was attired in his magnificent robes, which formed a derisive contrast to his own emaciated form. Pale as a spectre, his eyes half extinguished beneath his languishing eyelids, he desired his friends to lead him to his usual seat on the bench appropriated to earls, while all the lords rose at his entrance, astounded at the unexpected apparition, and bowed to him in admiration, as the Roman Senate might have done had Tiberius, dead and forgotten, returned among them. He listened in silence and with profound attention to the speech of the Duke of Richmond, the mover of the proposition, and when he had concluded, Lord Chatham rose to reply.

"Then this dying man summoned up strength enough to speak for three whole hours; he found fire enough within his heart to lend lightnings to his eyes; in his soul he found accents which stirred up the hearts of all who heard him.

"It is true that he was speaking against France, it is true that he was instilling into the minds of his countrymen the hatred which he felt, it is true that he had called up all his energies, all his fervent eloquence, to ruin and devour this country, the hated rival of his own. He forbade that America should be recognised as independent, he forbade all sort of compromise; he cried, War! war! He spoke, as Hannibal spoke against Rome, as Cato against Carthage! He declared that the duty of every loyal Englishman was to perish ruined, rather than to suffer that a

colony, even one single colony, should detach itself from the mother country. Having concluded his peroration, having hurled his last threat, he fell to the ground as if thunder-stricken.

"He had nothing more to do in this world, — he was carried expiring from the house.

"Some few days afterwards he was dead."

"Oh! oh!" cried both Billot and Pitou, simultaneously, "what a man this Lord Chatham was!"

"He was the father of the young man of thirty who is now occupying our attention," pursued Gilbert. "Lord Chatham died at the age of seventy. If the son lives to the same age, we shall have to endure William Pitt for forty years longer. This is the man, Father Billot, with whom we have to contend; this is the man who now governs Great Britain, who well remembers the names of Lameth, of Rochambeau, and Lafayette, who at this moment knows the name of every man in the National Assembly; he who has sworn a deadly hatred to Louis XVI., the author of the treaty of 1778; the man, in short, who will not breathe freely as long as there shall be a loaded musket in France and a full pocket. Do you begin to understand?"

"I understand that he has a great detestation of France: yes, that is true, but I do not altogether see your meaning."

"Nor I," said Pitou.

"Well, then, read these four words." And he presented a paper to Pitou.

"English again," cried Pitou.

"Yes; these are the words: '*Don't mind the money.*'"

"I hear the words, but I do not understand them," rejoined Pitou.

Gilbert translated the words, and then:—

"But more than this: he farther on reiterates the same advice, for he says, 'Tell them not to be sparing of money, and they need not send me any accounts.'"

"Then they are arming," said Billot.

"No; they are bribing."

"But to whom is this letter addressed?"

"To everybody and to nobody. The money which is thus given, thus strewn abroad, thus lavished, is given to peasants, to artisans, to wretches, to men in short who will degrade our revolution."

Father Billot held down his head: these words explained many things.

"Would you have knocked down De Launay with the butt end of a musket, Billot?"

"No."

"Would you have killed Flesselles by firing a pistol at him?"

"No."

"Would you have hanged Foulon?"

"No."

"Would you have carried the still bleeding heart of Berthier and placed it on the table of the electors?"

"Infamy!" exclaimed Billot. "On the contrary, however guilty this man may have been, I would have allowed myself to be torn to pieces could I have saved him by it; and the proof of this is that I was wounded in defending him, and that but for Pitou, who dragged me to the river side —"

"Oh! that is true," cried Pitou, "but for me, Father Billot would have had a bad time of it."

"Well, then, see you now, Billot, there are many men who would act as you have done, when they feel that they have some one to assist them near them, and who on the contrary, if abandoned to bad examples, become wicked, then ferocious; then, when the evil is done, why, 't is done."

"But, in short," observed Billot, objectingly, "admitting that Mr. Pitt, or rather his money, had something to do with the death of Flesselles, of Foulon, and of Berthier, what would he gain by it?"

Gilbert began to laugh with that inaudible laugh which astonishes the simple, but yet makes the thinking shudder.

"What would he gain by it?" he exclaimed; "can you ask that?"

"Yes, I do ask it."

"I will tell you. It is this : you were much pleased with the revolution, were you not, — you who walked in blood to take the Bastile?"

"Yes, I was pleased with it."

"Well! you now like it less. Well! now you regret Villers-Cotterêts, your farm, the quietude of your plain, the shades of your great forests."

"*Frigida Tempe*," murmured Pitou.

"Oh, yes, you are right," sighed Billot.

"Well, then, you, Father Billot, you, a farmer, you, the proprietor of land, you, a child of the Isle-de-France, and consequently a Frenchman of the olden time, you represent the third order, you belong to that which is called the majority. Well, then, you are disgusted."

"I acknowledge it."

"Then the majority will become disgusted as you are."

"And what then?"

"And you will one day open your arms to the soldiers of the Duke of Brunswick, or of Mr. Pitt, who will come to you in the name of those two liberators of France to restore wholesome doctrine."

"Never!"

"Pshaw! wait a little."

"Flesselles, Berthier, and Foulon were at bottom rascals," observed Pitou.

"Assuredly, as Monsieur de Sartines and Monsieur de Maurepas were villains, as Monsieur d'Argenson and Monsieur de Philippeaux were before them, as Monsieur Law was, as the Leblancs, the De Parises, the Duvernays were villains, as Fouquet was, as Mazarin was also, as Somblancey, as Enguerrand de Marigny were villains, as Monsieur de Brienne is towards Monsieur de Calonne, as Monsieur de Calonne is towards Monsieur de Necker, as Monsieur de Necker will be to the administration which we shall have in two years."

"Oh! oh! doctor!" murmured Billot, "Monsieur de Necker a villain, — never!"

"As you will be, my good Billot, a villain in the eyes of little Pitou here, in case one of Mr. Pitt's agents should teach him certain theories, backed by the influence of a pint of brandy and ten francs per day for getting up disturbances. This word *villain*, do you see, Billot, is the word by which in revolutions we designate the man who thinks differently from us; we are all destined to bear that name more or less; some will bear it so far that their countrymen will inscribe it on their tombs, others so much farther that posterity will ratify the epithet. This, my dear Billot, is what I see, and which you do not see. Billot, Billot, people of real worth must therefore not withdraw."

"Bah!" cried Billot, "even were honest people to withdraw, the revolution would still run its course: it is in full motion."

Another smile rose to the lips of Gilbert.

"Great child!" cried he, "who would abandon the handle of the plough, unyoke the horses from it, and then say, 'Good! the plough has no need of me, the plough will trace its furrow by itself.' But, my friends, who was it undertook the revolution? Honest people, were they not?"

"France flatters herself that it is so. It appears to me that Lafayette is an honest man; it appears to me that Bailly is an honest man; it appears to me that Monsieur de Necker is an honest man; it appears to me that Monsieur Elie, Monsieur Hullin, and Monsieur Maillard, who fought side by side with me, are honest people; it appears to me that you yourself —"

"Well, Billot, if honest people, if you, if I, if Maillard, if Hullin, if Elie, if Necker, if Bailly, if Lafayette should withdraw, who would carry on the work? Why, those wretches, those assassins, those villains, whom I have pointed out to you, — the agents, the agents of Mr. Pitt!"

"Try to answer that, Father Billot," said Pitou, convinced of the justice of the doctor's argument.

"Well, then," replied Billot, "we will arm ourselves, and shoot these villains down as if they were dogs."

"Wait a moment, — who will arm themselves?"

"Everybody."

"Billot, Billot! remember one thing, my good friend, and it is this, that what we are doing at this moment is called — What do you call what we are now doing, Billot?"

"Talking politics, Monsieur Gilbert."

"Well! in politics there is no longer any absolute crime; one is a villain or an honest man, as we favour or thwart the interests of the man who judges us. Those whom you call villains will always give some specious reason for their crimes; and to many honest people, who may have had a direct or an indirect interest in the commission of these crimes, these very villains will appear honest men also. From the moment that we reach that point, Billot, we must beware. There will then be men to hold the plough-handle. It will move onward, Billot, — it will move onward, and without us."

"It is frightful," said the farmer; "but if it moves onward without us, where will it stop?"

"God only knows!" exclaimed Gilbert; "as to myself, I know not."

"Well, then, if you do not know, you, who are a learned man, Monsieur Gilbert, I, who am an ignoramus, cannot be expected to know anything of the matter. I augur from it —"

"Well, what do you augur from it? Let us hear."

"I augur from it that what we had better do — I mean Pitou and myself — is to return to the farm. We will again take to the plough, — the real plough, — that of iron and wood, with which we turn up the earth, and not the one of flesh and blood, called the French people, and which is as restive as a vicious horse. We will make our corn grow instead of shedding blood, and we shall live free, joyous, and happy as lords in our own domain. Come with us, come with us, Monsieur Gilbert. The deuce! I like to know where I am going!"

"One moment, my stout-hearted friend," cried Gilbert.

"No, I know not whither I am going. I have told you so and I repeat it to you; however, I still go on, and I will continue still to do so. My duty is traced out to me; my life belongs to God; but my works are the debt which I shall pay to my country. If my conscience says to me, 'Go on, Gilbert, you are in the right road, go on,' that is all that I require. If I am mistaken, men will punish me, but God will absolve me."

"But sometimes men punish those who are not mistaken. You said so yourself just now."

"And I say it again. It matters not; I persist, Billot. Be it an error or not, I shall go on. To guarantee that the events will not prove my inability, God forbid that I should pretend to do so. But before all, Billot, the Lord has said, 'Peace be to the man of good intentions.' Therefore, be one of those to whom God has promised peace. Look at Monsieur de Lafayette, in America as well as France, — this is the third white charger he has worn out, without counting those he will wear out in future. Look at Monsieur de Bailly, who wears out his lungs. Look at the king, who wears out his popularity. Come, come, Billot, let us not be egotistical. Let us also wear ourselves out a little. Remain with me, Billot."

"But to do what, if we do not prevent evil being done?"

"Billot, remember never to repeat those words; for I should esteem you less. You have been trampled under foot, you have received hard fisticuffs, hard knocks from the butt-ends of muskets, and even from bayonets, when you wished to save Foulon and Berthier."

"Yès, and even a great many," replied the farmer, passing his hand over his still painful body.

"And as to me," said Pitou, "I had one eye almost put out."

"And all that for nothing," added Billot.

"Well, my children, if, instead of there being only ten, fifteen, twenty, of your courage, there had been a hundred two hundred, three hundred, you would have saved the

unhappy man from the frightful death which was inflicted on him; you would have spared the nation the blot which has sullied it. And that is the reason why, instead of returning to the country, which is tolerably tranquil, — that is why, Billot, I exact, as far as I can exact anything of you, my friend, that you should remain at Paris, — that I may have always near me a vigorous arm, an upright heart; that I might test my mind and my works on the faithful touchstone of your good sense and your pure patriotism; and, in fine, that we might strew around us, not gold, for that we have not, but our love of country and of the public welfare, in which you would be my agent with a multitude of misled, unfortunate men, — my staff, should my feet slip, — my staff, should I have occasion to strike a blow."

"A blind man's dog," said Billot, with sublime simplicity.

"Precisely," said Gilbert, in the same tone.

"Well," said Billot, "I accept your proposal. I will be whatever you may please to make me."

"I know that you are abandoning everything, — fortune, wife, child, and happiness, Billot. But you may be tranquil; it will not be for long."

"And I," said Pitou, "what am I to do?"

"You?" said Gilbert, looking at the ingenuous and hardy youth who boasted not much of his intelligence, — "you will return to the farm, to console Billot's family, and explain to them the holy mission he has undertaken."

"Instantly," cried Pitou, trembling with joy at the idea of returning to Catherine.

"Billot," said Gilbert, "give him your instructions."

"They are as follows," said Billot.

"I am all attention."

"Catherine is appointed by me as mistress of the house. Do you understand?"

"And Madame Billot?" exclaimed Pitou, somewhat surprised at this slight offered to the mother, to the advancement of the daughter.

"Pitou," said Gilbert, who had at once caught the idea of Billot, from seeing a slight blush suffuse the face of the honest farmer, "remember the Arabian proverb, 'To hear is to obey.'"

Pitou blushed in his turn. He had almost understood, and felt the indiscretion of which he had been guilty.

"Catherine has all the judgment of the family," added Billot unaffectedly, in order to explain his idea.

Gilbert bowed in token of assent.

"Is that all?" inquired the youth.

"All that I have to say," replied Billot.

"But not as regards me," said Gilbert.

"I am listening," observed Pitou, well disposed to attend to the Arabian proverb cited by Gilbert.

"You will go with a letter I shall give you to the College Louis-le-Grand," added Gilbert. "You will deliver that letter to the Abbé Bérardier; he will intrust Sébastien to you, and you will bring him here. After I have embraced him, you will take him to Villers-Cotterêts, where you will place him in the hands of the Abbé Fortier, that he may not altogether lose his time. On Sundays and Thursdays he will go out with you. Make him walk in the meadows and in the woods. It will be more conducive to my tranquillity and his health that he should be in the country yonder than here."

"I have understood you perfectly," said Pitou, delighted to be thus restored to the friend of his childhood, and to the vague aspirations of a sentiment somewhat more adult, which had been awakened within him by the magic name of Catherine.

He rose and took leave of Gilbert, who smiled, and of Billot, who was dreaming.

Then he set off, running at full speed, to fetch Sébastien Gilbert, his foster brother, from the college.

"And now we," said Gilbert to Billot, "we must set to work."

CHAPTER XLV.

MEDEA.

A DEGREE of calmness had succeeded at Versailles to the terrible moral and political agitations which we have placed before the eyes of our readers.

The king breathed again, and although he could not help reflecting on the suffering his Bourbon pride had endured during his journey to Paris, he consoled himself with the idea of his reconquered popularity.

During this time Monsieur de Necker was organising, and by degrees losing his.

As to the nobility, they were beginning to prepare their defection or their resistance.

The people were watching and waiting.

During this time the queen, thrown back, as it were, on the resources of her own mind, assured that she was the object of many hatreds, shut herself up closely; she dissimulated, for she also knew that, although the object of hatred to many, she was at the same time the object of many hopes.

Since the journey of the king to Paris, she had scarcely caught a glimpse of Gilbert.

Once, however, he had presented himself to her in the vestibule which led to the king's apartments.

And there, as he had bowed to her very humbly and respectfully, she was the first to begin a conversation with him.

"Good day, monsieur," said she to him; "are you going to the king?"

And then she added, with a smile, in which there was a slight tinge of irony, —

“Is it as counsellor, or as physician?”

“It is as his physician, madame,” replied Gilbert. “I have to-day an appointed service.”

She made a sign to Gilbert to follow her. The doctor obeyed.

They went into a small sitting-room, which led to the king's bedroom.

“Well, monsieur,” said she, “you see that you were deceiving me when you assured me the other day, with regard to the journey to Paris, that the king was incurring no danger.”

“Who, I, madame?” cried Gilbert, astonished.

“Undoubtedly; was not the king fired at?”

“Who has said that, madame?”

“Everybody, monsieur; and, above all, those who saw the poor woman fall almost beneath the wheels of the king's carriage. Who says that? Why, Monsieur de Beauvau and Monsieur d'Estaing, who saw your coat torn and your frill perforated by the ball.”

“Madame!”

“The ball which thus grazed you, monsieur, might have killed the king, as it killed that unfortunate woman; for, in short, it was neither you nor that poor woman that the murderers wished to kill.”

“I do not believe in such a crime,” replied the doctor, hesitating.

“Be it so; but I believe in it, monsieur,” rejoined the queen, fixing her eyes on Gilbert.

“At all events, if there was intentional crime, it ought not to be imputed to the people.”

“Ah!” she exclaimed, “to whom, then, must it be attributed? Speak.”

“Madame,” continued Gilbert, shaking his head, “for some time past I have been watching and studying the people. Well, then, the people, when they assassinate in

revolutionary times, the people kill with their hands; they are then like the furious tiger, the irritated lion. The tiger and the lion use no intermediary agent between their fury and their victim; they kill for killing's sake; they spill blood to spill it; they like to dye their teeth, to steep their claws in it."

"Witness Foulon and Berthier, you would say. But was not Flesselles killed by a shot from a pistol? I was so told, at least. But after all," continued the queen, in a tone of irony, "perhaps it was not true; we crowned heads are so surrounded by flatterers."

Gilbert in his turn looked intently at the queen.

"Oh, as to him!" said he, "you do not believe more than I do, madame, that it was the people who killed him. There were people who were interested in bringing about his death."

The queen reflected.

"In fact," she replied, "that may be possible."

"Then," said Gilbert, bowing, as if to ask the queen if she had anything more to say to him.

"I understand, monsieur," said the queen, gently, stopping the doctor with an almost friendly gesture. "However that may be, let me tell you that you will never save the king's life so effectually by your medical skill as you did three days ago with your own breast."

Gilbert bowed a second time.

But as he saw that the queen remained, he remained also.

"I ought to have seen you again, monsieur," said the queen, after a momentary repose.

"Your Majesty had no further need of me," said Gilbert.

"You are modest."

"I wish I were not so, madame."

"And why?"

"Because, being less modest, I should be less timid, and consequently better able to serve my friends or to frustrate enemies."

"Why do you make that distinction? You say, *my* friends, but do not say *my* enemies."

"Because, madame, I have no enemies; or rather, because I will not, for my part at least, admit that I have any."

The queen looked at him with surprise.

"I mean to say," continued Gilbert, "that those only are my enemies who hate me, but that I, on my side, hate no one."

"Because?"

"Because I no longer love any one, madame."

"Are you ambitious, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"At one time I hoped to become so, madame."

"And —"

"And that passion proved abortive, as did every other."

"There is one, however, that still remains in it," said the queen, with a slight shade of artful irony.

"In my heart? And what passion is that, good Heaven?"

"Your patriotism."

Gilbert bowed.

"Oh, that is true," said he. "I adore my country, and for it I would make every sacrifice."

"Alas!" said the queen, with undefinable melancholy, "there was a time when a good Frenchman would not have expressed that thought in the terms you now have used."

"What does the queen mean to say?" respectfully inquired Gilbert.

"I mean to say, monsieur, that in the times of which I speak it was impossible for a Frenchman to love his country without at the same time loving his queen and king."

Gilbert blushed; he bowed, and felt within his heart one of those electric shocks which, in her seducing intimacies, the queen produced on those who approached her.

"You do not answer, monsieur," she said.

"Madame," cried Gilbert, "I may venture to boast that no one loves the monarchy more ardently than myself."

"Are we living in times, monsieur, when it is sufficient to say this? and would it not be better to prove it by our acts?"

"But, madame," said Gilbert, with surprise, "I beg your Majesty to believe that all the king or queen might command —"

"You would do, — is it not so?"

"Assuredly, madame."

"In doing which, monsieur," said the queen, resuming in spite of herself a slight degree of her accustomed haughtiness, "you would only be fulfilling a duty."

"Madame —"

"God, who has given omnipotence to kings," continued Marie Antoinette, "has released them from the obligation of being grateful to those who merely fulfil a duty."

"Alas! alas! madame," rejoined Gilbert, "the time is approaching when your servants will deserve more than your gratitude, if they will only fulfil their duty."

"What is it you say, monsieur?"

"I mean to say, madame, that in these days of disorder and demolition you will in vain seek for friends where you have been accustomed to find servants. Pray, pray to God, madame, to send you other servants, other supporters, other friends, than those you have."

"Do you know any such?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then point them out to me."

"See, now, madame; I who now speak to you, I was your enemy but yesterday."

"My enemy! and why were you so?"

"Because you ordered that I should be imprisoned."

"And to-day?"

"To-day, madame," replied Gilbert, bowing, "I am your servant."

"And your object?"

"Madame —"

"The object for which you have become my servant? It is not in your nature, monsieur, to change your opinion, your belief, your affections, so suddenly. You are a man, Monsieur Gilbert, whose remembrances are deeply planted; you know how to perpetuate your vengeance. Come, now, tell me what was the motive of this change."

"Madame, you reproached me but now with loving my country too passionately."

"No one can ever love it too much, monsieur; the only question is to know how we love it. For myself, I love my country." (Gilbert smiled.) "Oh! no false interpretations, monsieur; my country is France. A German by blood, I am a Frenchwoman in my heart. I love France; but it is through the king. I love France from the respect due to God, who has given us the throne. And now to you, monsieur."

"To me, madame?"

"Yes, it is now for you to speak. I understand you, do I not? To you it is quite another matter. You love France, merely and simply for France herself."

"Madame," replied Gilbert, bowing, "I should fail in respect to your Majesty should I fail in frankness."

"Oh!" exclaimed the queen, "frightful, frightful period! when all people who pretend to be people of worth isolate two things which have never been separated from each other, — two principles which have always gone hand in hand, — France and her king. But have you not a tragedy of one of your poets, in which it is asked of a queen who has been abandoned by all, 'What now remains to you?' and to which she replies, 'Myself!' Well, then, like Medea, I also will say, 'Myself!' and we shall see."

And she angrily left the room, leaving Gilbert in amazement.

She had just raised to his view, by the breath of her anger, one corner of the veil behind which she was combining the whole work of the counter-revolution.

"Come, come," said Gilbert to himself, as he went

into the king's room, "the queen is meditating some project."

"Really," said the queen to herself, as she was returning to her apartment, "decidedly, there is nothing to be made of this man. He has energy. but he has no devotedness."

Poor princess! with whom the word devotedness is synonymous with servility.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHAT THE QUEEN WISHED.

GILBERT returned to Monsieur Necker after his professional visit to the king, whom he had found as tranquil as the queen was agitated.

The king was composing speeches, he was examining accounts, he was meditating reforms in the laws.

This well-intentioned man, whose look was so kind, whose soul was so upright, whose heart erred only from prejudices inherent in the royal condition, this man was absolutely bent on producing trivial reforms in exchange for the serious inroads made on his prerogative. He was obstinately bent on examining the distant horizon with his short-sighted eyes, when an abyss was yawning beneath his feet. This man inspired Gilbert with a feeling of profound pity. As to the queen, it was not thus, and, in spite of his impassibility, Gilbert felt that she was one of those women whom it was necessary to love passionately or to hate even to the death.

When she had returned to her own apartment, Marie Antoinette felt as if an immense burden were weighing on her heart.

And, in fact, whether as a woman or as a queen, she felt that there was nothing stable around her, — nothing which could aid her in supporting even a portion of the burden which was crushing her.

On whichever side she turned her eyes, she saw only hesitation and doubt.

The courtiers, anxious with regard to their fortunes, and realising what they could.

Relations and friends thinking of emigrating.

The proudest woman of them all, *Andrée*, gradually becoming estranged from her in heart and mind.

The noblest and the most beloved of all the men who surrounded her, *Charny*, wounded by her caprice, and a prey to doubt.

The position of affairs caused her great anxiety, — she who was instinct and sagacity personified.

How could this man, who was purity itself, how could this heart without alloy have changed so suddenly?

“No, he has not yet changed,” said the queen to herself, sighing deeply, “but he is about to change.”

He is about to change! Frightful conviction to the woman who loves passionately, insupportable to the woman who loves with pride.

Now the queen loved *Charny*, both passionately and proudly.

The queen was suffering therefore from two wounds.

And yet at that very time, at the time when she felt the consciousness of having acted wrongly, of the evil she had committed, she had still time to remedy it.

But the mind of that crowned woman was not a flexible mind. She could not descend to waver, even though she knew she was acting unjustly; had it been towards an indifferent person, she might or would have wished to have shown some greatness of soul, and then she might perhaps have asked for forgiveness.

But to the man whom she had honoured with an affection at once so tender and so pure, to him whom she had deigned to admit to a participation in her most secret thoughts, the queen considered it would be degrading to make the slightest concession.

The misfortune of queens who condescend to love a subject is to love him always as queens, but never as women.

Marie Antoinette estimated herself at so high a price, that she thought there was nothing human which could compensate her love, not even blood, not even tears.

From the moment she felt that she was jealous of Andrée she had begun to dwindle morally.

The consequence of this inferiority was her caprice.

The consequence of her caprice was anger.

The consequence of her anger was evil thoughts, which always bring in their train evil actions.

Charny did not enter into any of the considerations which we have just stated; but he was a man, and he had comprehended that Marie Antoinette was jealous of his wife.

Of his wife, towards whom he had never shown any affection.

There is nothing which so much revolts an upright heart, one altogether incapable of treachery, as to see that it is believed capable of treachery.

There is nothing which so much conduces to direct the attention towards a person as the jealousy with which that person is honoured.

Above all, if that jealousy be really unjust.

Then the person who is suspected reflects.

He alternately considers the jealous heart and the person who has caused that jealousy.

The greater the soul of the jealous person, the greater is the danger into which it throws itself.

In fact, how is it possible to suppose that a person of expansive heart, of superior intelligence, of legitimate pride, could become agitated for a mere nothing or for anything of trifling value? Why should a woman who is beautiful be jealous? Why should a woman of the highest rank and power be jealous? How could it be supposed that, possessing all these advantages, a woman could be jealous for a mere nothing, or for anything of trifling value?

Charny knew that Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney had been long a friend of the queen,—that in former days she had been well treated, always preferred by her. How then was it that she no longer loved her? How was it that Marie Antoinette had all at once become jealous of her?

She must, therefore, have discerned some secret and mysterious beauty which Monsieur de Charny had not discovered, and undoubtedly because he had not sought for it.

She had therefore felt that Charny might have perceived something in this woman, and that she, the queen, had lost in the comparison.

Or again, she might have believed that she perceived that Charny loved her less, without there being any extraneous cause for this diminution of his passion.

There is nothing more fatal to the jealous than the knowledge which they thus give to others of the temperature of that heart which they wish to keep in the most fervid degree of heat.

How often does it happen that the loved object is informed of his coldness, — of a coldness which he had begun to experience, without being able to account for it?

And when he discovers that, when he feels the truth of the reproach, say, madame, how many times have you found that he has allowed your chains to be again thrown round him, that his languishing flame has been rekindled?

Oh unskilfulness of lovers! It is, however, true, that where much art or adroitness is exercised there scarcely ever exists a great degree of love.

Marie Antoinette had therefore herself taught Charny to believe, by her own anger and injustice, that his heart was less full of love than formerly.

And as soon as he knew this, he endeavoured to account for it, and, looking around him, very naturally discovered the cause of the queen's jealousy.

Andrée, the poor, abandoned Andrée, who had been a bride, but had never been a wife.

He pitied Andrée.

The scene of the return from Paris had unveiled the secret of this deep-rooted jealousy, so carefully concealed from all eyes.

The queen also clearly saw that all was discovered, and, as she would not bend before Charny, she employed another

method, which, in her opinion, would lead to the same end.

She began to treat Andrée with great kindness.

She admitted her to all her excursions, to all her evening parties; she overwhelmed her with caresses; she made her the envy of all the other ladies of the court.

And Andrée allowed her to do all this, with some astonishment, but without feeling grateful for it. She had for years said to herself that she belonged to the queen, that the queen could do as she pleased with her, and therefore was it that she submitted to it.

But, on the other side, as it was necessary that the irritation of the woman should be vented on some one, the queen began severely to ill-treat Charny. She no longer spoke to him; she was absolutely harsh to him; she affected to pass evenings, days, weeks, without observing that he was present.

Only, when he was absent the heart of the poor woman swelled with anxiety; her eyes wandered around eagerly, seeking him whom, the moment they perceived, they were instantly averted from.

Did she need the support of an arm, had she an order to give, had she a smile to throw away, it was bestowed on the first comer.

But this first comer never failed to be a handsome and distinguished man.

The queen imagined she was curing her own wound by wounding Charny.

The latter suffered, but was silent. Not an angry or impatient gesture escaped him. He was a man possessing great self-command, and, although suffering frightful torture, he remained to appearance perfectly impassible.

Then was seen a singular spectacle, — a spectacle which women alone can furnish and fully comprehend.

Andrée felt all the sufferings of her husband, and, as she loved him with that angelic love which never had conceived a hope, she pitied him, and allowed him to perceive she did so.

The result of this compassion was a sweet and tacit reconciliation. She endeavoured to console Charny without allowing him to perceive that she comprehended the need he had of consolation.

And all this was done with that delicacy which may be called essentially feminine, seeing that women alone are capable of it.

Marie Antoinette, who had sought to divide in order to reign, perceived that she had made a false move, and that she was only drawing together two souls by the very means which she had adopted to keep them separate.

Then the poor woman, during the silence and the solitude of night, endured the most frightful paroxysms of despair, such as would make us wonder that God had created beings of sufficient strength to support them.

And the queen would assuredly have succumbed to so many ills, but for the constant occupation given to her mind by political events. No one complains of the hardness of a bed when their limbs are exhausted by fatigue.

Such were the circumstances under which the queen had been living since the return of the king to Versailles, up to the day when she thought seriously of resuming the absolute exercise of her power.

For in her pride she attributed to her decadency the species of depreciation to which for some time the woman had been subjected.

To her energetic mind to think was to act. She therefore commenced her combinations without losing a moment.

Alas ! these combinations which she was then meditating were those which wrought out her perdition.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE FLANDERS REGIMENT.

UNFORTUNATELY, in the queen's opinion, all the facts which had occurred were merely accidents, which a firm and active hand might remedy. It was only necessary to concentrate her power.

The queen, seeing that the Parisians had so suddenly transformed themselves into soldiers, and appeared to wish for war, resolved on showing them what real war was actually.

"Up to this time they have only had to deal with the Invalides, or with Swiss, but ill supported and wavering; we will show them what it is to have opposed to them two or three well-disciplined and royalist regiments.

"Perhaps there may be a regiment of this description which has already put to flight some of these rebellious rioters, and has shed blood in the convulsions of civil war. We will have the most celebrated of these regiments ordered here. The Parisians will then understand that their best policy will be to abstain from provocation."

This was after all the quarrel between the king and the National Assembly with regard to the *veto*. The king during two months had been struggling to recover some tattered shreds of sovereignty; he had, conjointly with the administration and Mirabeau, endeavoured to neutralise the republican outburst which was endeavouring to efface royalty in France.

The queen had exhausted herself in this struggle, and was exhausted above all from having seen the king succumb.

The king in this contention had lost all his power and the remains of his popularity. The queen had gained an additional name, — a nickname.

One of those words which were altogether foreign to the ears of the people, and from that reason more pleasing to the ears of the people, — a name which had not yet become an insult, but which was soon to become the most opprobrious of all, — a witty saying, which afterwards was changed into a sanguinary rallying cry.

In short, she was called *Madame Veto*.

This name was destined to be borne in revolutionary songs beyond the banks of the Rhine, to terrify in Germany the subjects and the friends of those who, having sent to France a German queen, had some right to be astonished that she was insulted by the name of the *Autrichienne* (the Austrian woman).

This name was destined in Paris to accompany, in the insensate dancing rings, on days of massacre, the last cries, the hideous agonies, of the victims.

Marie Antoinette was thenceforth called *Madame Veto*, until the day when she was to be called the Widow Capet.

She had already changed her name three times. After having been called the *Autrichienne*, she was next called *Madame Deficit*.

After the contests in which the queen had endeavoured to interest her friends by the imminence of their own danger, she had remarked that sixty thousand passports had been applied for at the Hôtel de Ville.

Sixty thousand of the principal families of Paris and of France had gone off to rejoin in foreign countries the friends and relatives of the queen.

A very striking example, and one which had forcibly struck the queen.

And therefore from that moment she meditated a skillfully concerted flight, — a flight supported by armed force, should it be necessary, — a flight which had for its object safety, after which the faithful who remained in France

might carry on the civil war, — that is to say, chastise the revolutionists.

The plan was not a bad one. It would assuredly have succeeded ; but behind the queen the evil genius was also watching.

Strange destiny ! that woman who inspired so many with enthusiastic devotedness could nowhere find discretion.

It was known at Paris that she wished to fly before she had even persuaded herself to adopt the measure.

Marie Antoinette did not perceive that, from the moment her intention had become known, her plan had become impracticable.

However, a regiment celebrated for its royalist sympathies, the Flanders regiment, arrived at Versailles by forced marches.

This regiment had been demanded by the municipal authorities of Versailles, who, tormented by the extraordinary guards, and by the strict watch it was necessary to keep around the palace, incessantly threatened by fresh demands for distributions of provisions, and successive disturbances, stood in need of some other military force than the National Guards and the militia.

The palace had already quite enough to do to defend itself.

The Flanders regiment arrived, as we have said ; and that it should at once assume the importance with which it was intended to be invested it was necessary that a brilliant reception should be given to it, that it might at once attract the attention of the people.

The Count d'Estaing assembled all the officers of the National Guard, and all those of the corps then present at Versailles, and went out to meet it.

The regiment made a solemn entry into Versailles, with its park of artillery and its ammunition wagons.

Around this group, which then became central, assembled a crowd of young gentlemen, who did not belong to any regular corps.

They adopted a sort of uniform by which they could recognise one another, and were joined by all the officers unattached, all the chevaliers of the Order of Saint-Louis, whom danger or interest had brought to Versailles.

After this they made excursions to Paris, where were seen these new enemies, fresh, insolent, and puffed up with a secret which was sure to escape them as soon as an opportunity should present itself.

At that moment the king might have escaped. He would have been supported, protected on his journey, and Paris, perhaps, still ignorant and ill prepared, would have allowed his departure.

But the evil genius of the Autrichienne was still watching.

Liège revolted against the Emperor, and the occupation which this revolt gave to Austria prevented her from thinking of the queen of France.

The latter, on her side, thought that in delicacy she must abstain from asking any aid at such a moment.

Then events to which impulsion had been given continued to rush on with lightning-like rapidity.

After the ovation in honour of the Flanders regiment, the body guards decided on giving a dinner to the officers of that regiment.

This banquet, this festival, was fixed for the 1st of October. Every important personage in the town was invited to it.

And what then was the object of this banquet? To fraternise with the Flanders soldiers. And why should not soldiers fraternise with one another, since the districts and the provinces fraternise?

Was it forbidden by the constitution that gentlemen should fraternise?

The king was still the master of his regiments, and he alone commanded them; the palace of Versailles was his own property; he alone had a right to receive into it whomsoever he might please.

And why should he not receive brave soldiers and worthy

gentlemen within it, men who had just come from Douai, where they had *behaved well*?

Nothing could be more natural. No one thought of being astonished, and still less of being alarmed at it.

This repast, to be taken thus in union, was about to cement the affection which ought always to subsist between all the corps of a French army, destined to defend both liberty and royalty.

Besides, did the king even know what had been agreed upon?

Since the events of Paris, the king, free, thanks to his concessions, no longer occupied himself with public matters; the burden of affairs had been taken from him. He desired to reign no longer, since others reigned for him, but he did not think that he ought to weary himself by doing nothing all day long.

The king, while the gentlemen of the National Assembly were fraudulently cutting and contriving, — the king amused himself by hunting.

The king, while the nobility and the reverend bishops were abandoning, on the 4th of August, their dove-cotes and their feudal rights, their pigeons and their parchments, — the king, who was very willing, as all the world were doing it, to make some sacrifices, abolished all his hunting train, but he did not cease to hunt on that account.

Now, the king, while the officers of the Flanders regiment were to be dining with his body guards, would be enjoying the pleasures of the chase, as he did every day; the tables would be cleared away before his return.

This would even inconvenience him so little, and he would so little inconvenience the banquet in question, that he was resolved to ask the queen to allow the festival to be given within the walls of the palace itself.

The queen saw no reason for refusing this hospitality to the Flanders soldiers.

She gave them the theatre for their banquet-room, in which she allowed them for that day to construct a flooring

even with the stage, that there might be ample space for the guards and their guests.

When a queen wishes to be hospitable to French gentlemen, she is so to the full extent of her power. This was their dining-room, but they also required a drawing-room; the queen allowed them to use the Salon of Hercules.

On a Thursday, the 1st of October, as we have already said, this feast was given, which was destined to fill so fatal a page in the history of the blindness and improvidence of royalty.

The king had gone out hunting.

The queen was shut up in her own apartments, sorrowful and pensive, and determined not to hear either the ringing of the glasses when the officers gave their toasts, or the sound of their enthusiastic cheers.

Her son was in her arms; Andrée was with her; two women were at work in one corner of the room; those were the only persons with her.

The brilliantly attired officers, with their waving plumes and bright gleaming arms, by degrees entered the palace; their horses neighed before the grated gates of the royal stables, their clarions sounded as they approached, and the bands of the Flanders regiment and the guards filled the air with harmonious sounds.

Outside the gilded railings of the courtyard of the palace was a pale, inquisitive crowd, gloomily anxious, watching, analysing, and commenting on the joyous festival within, and the airs played by the military bands.

In gusts, like the squalls of a distant tempest, there exhaled from the open portals of the palace the sounds of merriment with the odours of the savoury viands.

It was very imprudent to allow this crowd of starving people to inhale the odours of the good cheer and wine,—to allow these morose people to hear these sounds of jovial festivity.

The festival was however continued, without anything disturbing its conviviality; for a time all was conducted

with sobriety and order; the officers, full of respect for the uniform they wore, at first conversed in an undertone, and drank moderately; during the first half-hour the programme which had been agreed upon was strictly adhered to.

The second course was put on the table.

Monsieur de Lusignan, the colonel of the Flanders regiment, rose and proposed four toasts. They were to the health of the king, the queen, the dauphin, and the royal family.

Four shouts of applause re-echoed from the vaulted roofs, and struck the ears of the sorrowful spectators outside the palace.

An officer rose, — perhaps he was a man of judgment and of courage, — a man of sound good sense, who foresaw the issue of all this, — a man sincerely attached to that royal family to whom he had just drank so noisily.

This man comprehended that among these toasts there was one which was omitted, which probably might present itself to their attention.

He therefore proposed this toast, "The Nation."

A long murmur preceded a long shout.

"No, no," cried every person present except the proposer of the toast.

And the toast to the nation was contemptuously rejected.

The festival had just assumed its real character, the torrent had found its real course.

It has been said, and it is still repeated, that the person who proposed this toast was but an instigator of an opposing manifestation.

However this might be, his words produced an untoward effect. To forget the nation might have been but a trifle, but to insult it was too much. It avenged itself.

As from this moment the ice was broken, as to the reserved silence succeeded boisterous cries and excited conversation, discipline became but a chimerical modesty; the dragoons, the grenadiers, the "hundred Swiss" were sent for, and even all the private soldiers in the palace.

The wine was pushed round quickly; ten times were the glasses filled; when the dessert was brought in, it was absolutely pillaged. Intoxication became general, the soldiers forgot that they were drinking with their officers; it was in reality a fraternal festival.

From all parts were heard shouts of "Long live the king! long live the queen!" So many flowers, so many lights, illuminating the brilliantly gilded arches, so many loyal lightnings darting from the eyes of these brave men, was a spectacle which would have been grateful to the eyes of the queen, and reassuring to those of the king.

This so unfortunate king, this so sorrowful queen, why were they not present at such a festival?

Some officious partisans withdrew from the dining-room, and ran to Marie Antoinette's apartments, and in an exaggerated style related what they had seen.

Then the sorrowing eyes of the queen became reanimated, and she rises from her chair. There is, then, some loyalty left, some affection in French hearts!

There is therefore something still to hope!

At the doors were soon assembled a crowd of courtiers; they entreat, they conjure the queen to pay a visit, merely to show herself for a moment in the festive hall, where two thousand enthusiastic subjects are consecrating by their hurrahs the religion of monarchical principles.

"The king is absent," she sorrowfully replied. "I cannot go there alone."

"But with Monseigneur the Dauphin," said some imprudent persons who still insisted on her going.

"Madame! madame!" whispered a voice into her ear, "remain here; I conjure you to remain."

The queen turned round, — it was the Count de Charny.

"What!" cried she, "are you not below with all those gentlemen?"

"I was there, madame, but have returned. The excitement down yonder is so great that it may prejudice your Majesty's interests more than may be imagined."

Marie Antoinette was in one of her sullen, her capricious days, with regard to Charny. It pleased her on that day to do precisely the contrary of everything that might have been agreeable to the count.

She darted at him a disdainful look, and was about to address some disobliging words to him, when, preventing her by a successful gesture, —

“For mercy’s sake, madame,” added he, “at least await the king’s advice.”

He thought by this to gain time.

“The king! the king!” exclaimed several voices; “the king has just returned from hunting.”

And this was the fact.

Marie Antoinette rises and runs to meet the king, who, still booted and covered with dust, entered the room.

“Sire,” cried she, “there is below a spectacle worthy of the King of France! Come with me! come with me!”

And she took the king’s arm and dragged him away, without looking at Charny, who dug his nails with anger into his breast.

Leading her son with her left hand, she descended the staircase. A whole flood of courtiers preceded or urged her on. She reaches the door of the theatre at the moment when, for the twentieth time, the glasses were being emptied with shouts of “Long live the king! long live the queen!”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE BANQUET GIVEN BY THE GUARDS.

At the moment when the queen appeared with the king and their son on the stage of the Opera, an immense acclamation, as sudden and as loud as the explosion of a mine, was heard from the banqueting table and boxes.

The inebriated soldiers, the officers delirious with wine and enthusiasm, waving their hats and sabres above their heads, shouted, "Long live the king! long live the queen! long live the dauphin!"

The bands immediately played, "O Richard! O my King!"

The allusion of this air had become so apparent, it so well expressed the thoughts of all present, it so faithfully translated the meaning of this banquet, that all, as soon as the air began, immediately sang the words.

The queen, in her enthusiasm, forgot that she was in the midst of inebriated men; and the king, though surprised, felt, with his accustomed sound sense, that it was no place for him, and that it was going beyond his conscientious feelings; but, weak and flattered at once more finding a popularity and zeal which he was no longer habituated to meet from his people, he by degrees allowed himself to be carried away by the general hilarity.

Charny, who during the whole festival had drunk nothing but water, followed the king and queen; he had hoped that all would have terminated without their being present, and then it would have been of but slight importance; they might have disavowed, have denied everything; but he turned pale at the thought that the presence of the king and queen would become an historical fact.

But his terror was increased greatly when he saw his brother Georges approach the queen, and, encouraged by her smile, address some words to her.

He was not near enough to hear the words, but by his gestures he could comprehend that he was making some request.

To this request the queen made a sign of assent; and, suddenly taking from her cap the cockade she wore upon it, gave it to the young man.

Charny shuddered, stretched forth his arms, and uttered a cry.

It was not even the white cockade, the French cockade, which the queen presented to her imprudent knight; it was the black cockade, the Austrian cockade, the cockade which was so hateful to French eyes.

What the queen then did was no longer a mere imprudence; it was an act of absolute treason.

And yet all these poor fanatics, whom God had doomed to ruin, were so insensate, that, when Georges de Charny presented to them this black cockade, those who wore the white cockade threw it from them; those who had the tricoloured one trampled it beneath their feet.

And then the excitement became so great that, unless they had wished to be stifled with their kisses, or to trample under foot those who threw themselves on their knees before them, the august hosts of the Flanders regiment felt obliged to retreat towards their apartments.

All this might have been considered as a sample of French folly, which the French are always ready enough to pardon, if these orgies had not gone beyond the point of enthusiasm; but they soon went much further.

Good royalists, when eulogising the king, must necessarily somewhat ill-treat the nation.

That nation in whose name so much vexation had been offered to the king that the bands had undoubtedly the right to play "*Peut-on affliger ce qu'on aime!*" — "Can we afflict those whom we love?"

It was while this air was being played that the king, the queen, and the dauphin withdrew.

They had scarcely left the theatre when, exciting one another, the boon companions metamorphosed the banqueting-room into a town taken by assault.

Upon a signal given by Monsieur Perseval, aide-de-camp to the Count d'Estaing, the trumpets sounded a charge.

A charge, and against whom? Against the absent enemy.

Against the people!

A charge! music so enchanting to French ears that it had the effect of transforming the stage of the Opera-house at Versailles into a battle-field, and the lovely ladies who were gazing from the boxes at the brilliant spectacle were the enemy.

The cry, "To the assault!" was uttered by a hundred voices, and the escalade of the boxes immediately commenced. It is true that the besiegers were in a humour which inspired so little terror that the besieged held out their hands to them.

The first who reached the balcony was a grenadier in the Flanders regiment. Monsieur de Perseval tore a cross from his own breast and decorated the grenadier with it.

It is true that it was a Limbourg cross, — one of those crosses which are scarcely considered crosses.

And all this was done under the Austrian colours, with loud vociferations against the national cockade.

Here and there some hollow and sinister sounds were uttered.

But, drowned by the howling of the singers, by the hurrahs of the besiegers, by the inspiring sounds of the trumpets, these noises were borne with threatening import to the ears of the people, who were, in the first place, astonished, and then became indignant.

It was soon known outside the palace, in the square, and afterwards in the streets, that the black cockade had been substituted for the white one, and that the tricoloured

cockade had been trampled under foot. It was also known that a brave officer of the National Guard, who had in spite of threats retained his tricoloured cockade, had been seriously wounded even in the king's apartments.

Then it was vaguely rumoured that one officer alone had remained motionless, sorrowful, and standing at the entrance of that immense banqueting-room converted into a circus, wherein all these madmen had been playing their insensate pranks, and had looked on, listened, and had shown himself, loyal and intrepid soldier as he was, submissive to the all-powerful will of the majority, taking upon himself the faults of others, accepting the responsibility of all the excesses committed by the army, represented on that fatal day by the officers of the Flanders regiment; but the name of this man, wise and alone amid so many madmen, was not even pronounced; and had it been it would never have been believed that the Count de Charny, the queen's favourite, was the man, who, although ready to die for her, had suffered more painfully than any other from the errors she had committed.

As to the queen, she had returned to her own apartments, completely giddy from the magic of the scene.

She was soon assailed by a throng of courtiers and flatterers.

"See," said they to her, "what is the real feeling of your troops; judge from this whether the popular fury for anarchical ideas, which has been so much spoken of, could withstand the ferocious ardour of French soldiers for monarchical ideas." And as all these words corresponded with the secret desires of the queen, she allowed herself to be led away by these chimeras, not perceiving that Charny had remained at a distance from her.

By degrees, however, the noises ceased; the slumber of the mind extinguished all the *ignes-fatui*, the phantasmagoria of intoxication. The king, besides, paid a visit to the queen at the moment she was about to retire, and let fall these words, replete with profound wisdom:—

“We shall see to-morrow.”

The imprudent man! by this saying, which to any other person but the one to whom it was addressed, would have been a warning and sage counsel, he had revived in the queen's mind feelings of provocation and resistance which had almost subsided.

“In fact,” murmured she, when the king had left her, “this flame, which was confined to the palace this evening, will spread itself in Versailles during the night, and to-morrow will produce a general conflagration throughout France. All these soldiers, all these officers, who have this evening given me such fervent pledges of their devotedness, will be called traitors, rebels to the nation, murderers of their country. They will call the chiefs of these aristocrats, the subalterns of the stipendiaries of Pitt and Cobourg, satellites of the barbarous powers of the savages of the North.

“Each of these heads which has worn the black cockade will be doomed to be fixed to the lamp-post on the Place de Grève.

“Each of those breasts, from which so loyally escaped those shouts of ‘Long live the queen!’ will, on the first popular commotion, be pierced with ignoble knives and infamous pikes.

“And it is I, again — I, always I, who have been the cause of all this! I shall have condemned to death all these brave and faithful servants, — I, the inviolable sovereign. They are hypocritically left unassailed when near me, but when away from me will be insulted from hatred.

“Oh, no! rather than be ungrateful to such a degree as that towards my only, my last friends, — rather than be so cowardly and so heartless, — I will take the fault upon myself. It is for me that all this has been done; upon me let all their anger fall. We shall then see how far their anger will be carried, — we shall see up to which step of my throne the impure tide will dare to ascend.”

And to the queen, animated by these thoughts, which

drove sleep from her pillow, and on which she meditated during the greater part of the night, the result of the events of the next day was no longer doubtful.

The next day came, clouded over with gloomy regrets, and ushered in by threatening murmurs.

On that day the National Guards, to whom the queen had presented their colours, came to the palace with heads cast down and averted eyes, to thank her Majesty.

It was easy to divine, from the attitude of these men, that they did not approve what had occurred; but, on the contrary, that they would have loudly disapproved it had they dared.

They had formed part of the procession, and had gone out to form part of the Flanders regiment; they had received invitations to the banquet, and had accepted them. Only, being more citizens than soldiers, it was they who, during the debauch, had uttered those disapproving groans which had not been heeded.

These observations on the following day had become a reproach, a blame.

When they came to the palace to thank the queen, they were escorted by a great crowd.

And, taking into consideration the serious nature of the circumstances, the ceremony became an imposing one.

The parties on both sides were about to discover with whom they would have to deal.

On their side, all those soldiers and officers who had so compromised themselves the evening before were anxious to ascertain how far they would be supported by the queen in their imprudent demonstrations, and had placed themselves before that people whom they had scandalised and insulted, that they might hear the first official words which should be uttered from the palace.

The weight of the whole counter-revolution was then hanging suspended over the head of the queen.

It was, however, still within her power to have withdrawn from this responsibility.

But she, proud as the proudest of her race, with great firmness, cast her clear and penetrating gaze all around her, whether friends or enemies, and, addressing herself in a sonorous voice to the officers of the National Guards, —

“Gentlemen,” said she, “I am much pleased at having presented you with your colours. The nation and the army ought to love the king as we love the nation and the army. *I was delighted with the events of yesterday.*”

Upon these words, which she emphasised in her firmest tone of voice, a murmur arose from the crowd, and loud applause re-echoed from the military ranks.

“We are supported,” said the latter.

“We are betrayed,” said the former.

Thus, poor queen, that fatal evening of the 1st of October was not an accidental matter; thus, unfortunate woman, you do not regret the occurrences of yesterday, — you do not repent.

And so far from repenting, you are delighted with them.

Charny, who was in the centre of a group, heard with a sigh of extreme pain this justification, — nay, more than that, this glorification of the orgies of the king’s guards.

The queen, on turning away her eyes from the crowd, met those of the count, and she fixed her looks on the countenance of her lover in order to ascertain the impression her words had produced upon him.

“Am I not courageous?” was the import of this look.

“Alas! madame, you are far more mad than courageous,” replied the gloomy countenance of the count.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE WOMEN BEGIN TO STIR.

At Versailles the court was talking heroically against the people.

At Paris they were becoming knight-errants against the court alone; knight-errantry was running about the streets.

These knights of the people were wandering about in rags, their hands upon the hilt of a sabre or the butt-end of a pistol, questioning their empty pockets or their hollow stomachs.

While at Versailles they drank too much, at Paris, alas! they did not eat enough.

There was too much wine on the table-cloths of Versailles.

Not sufficient flour in the bakers' shops at Paris.

Strange circumstances! a melancholy blindness, which, now that we are accustomed to the fall of thrones, will excite a smile of pity from political men.

To make a counter-revolution, and provoke to a combat people who are starving!

Alas! will say history, compelled to become a materialist philosopher, no people ever fight so desperately as those who have not dined.

It would, however, have been very easy to have given bread to the people, and then, most assuredly, the bread of Versailles would have appeared less bitter.

But the flour of Corbeil ceased to arrive. Corbeil is so far from Versailles! who, then, living with the king and queen, could have thought of Corbeil?

Unhappily, from this forgetfulness of the court, famine, that spectre which sleeps with so much difficulty, but which so easily awakens, — famine had descended, pale and agitated, into the streets of Paris. She listens at all the corners of the streets; she recruits her train of vagabonds and malefactors; she glues her livid face against the windows of the rich and of the public functionaries.

The men remember those commotions which had cost so much blood; they recall to mind the Bastille; they recollect Foulon, Berthier, and Flesselles; they fear to have the opprobrious name of assassins again attached to them, and they wait.

But the women, who have as yet done nothing but suffer! When women suffer, the suffering is triple: for the child who cries and who is unjust because it has not a consciousness of the cause; for the child who says to its mother, "Why do you not give me bread?" for the husband, who, gloomy and taciturn, leaves the house in the morning to return to it in the evening still more gloomy and taciturn; and, finally, for herself, the painful echo of conjugal and maternal sufferings. The women burn to do something in their turn; they wish to serve their country in their own way.

Besides, was it not a woman who brought about the 1st of October at Versailles?

It was therefore for the women, in their turn, to bring about the 5th of October at Paris.

Gilbert and Billot were sitting in the Café de Foy,¹ in the Palais Royal. It was at the Café de Foy that motions were proposed. Suddenly the door of the coffee-house is thrown open, and a woman enters it much agitated. She denounces the black and white cockades which from Versailles have invaded Paris; she proclaims the public danger.

It will be remembered that Charny had said to the queen, —

¹ A celebrated coffee-house.

"Madame, there will be really much to apprehend when the women begin to stir themselves."

This was also the opinion of Gilbert.

Therefore, on seeing that the women were actually bestirring themselves, he turned to Billot, uttering only these five words, —

"To the Hôtel de Ville!"

Since the conversation which had taken place between Billot, Gilbert, and Pitou, — and in consequence of which Pitou had returned to Villers-Cotterêts with young Sébastien Gilbert, — Billot obeyed Gilbert upon a single word, a gesture, a sign, for he had fully comprehended that, if he was strength, Gilbert was intelligence.

They both rushed out of the coffee-house, crossed the garden of the Palais Royal diagonally, and then through the Cour des Fontaines reached the Rue Saint-Honoré.

When they were near the corn-market they met a young girl coming out of the Rue Bourdonnais, who was beating a drum.

Gilbert stopped, astonished.

"What can this mean?" said he.

"Zounds! doctor, don't you see?" said Billot; "it is a pretty girl who is beating a drum, — and really not badly, on my faith."

"She must have lost something," said a passer-by.

"She is very pale," rejoined Billot.

"Ask her what she wants," said Gilbert.

"Ho! my pretty girl!" cried Billot, "what are you beating that drum for?"

"I am hungry," she replied, in a weak but shrill voice.

And she continued on her way beating the drum.

Gilbert had waited.

"Oh! oh!" cried he, "this is becoming terrible."

And he looked more attentively at the women who were following the young girl with the drum.

They were haggard, staggering, despairing.

Among these women there were some who had not tasted food for thirty hours.

From among these women, every now and then, would break forth a cry which was threatening even from its very feebleness, for it could be divined that it issued from famished mouths.

"To Versailles!" they cried, "to Versailles!"

And on their way they made signs to all the women whom they perceived in the houses, and they called to all the women who were at their windows.

A carriage drove by; two ladies were in that carriage; they put their heads out of the windows and began to laugh.

The escort of the drum-beater stopped. About twenty women seized the horses, and then, rushing to the coach doors, made the two ladies alight and join their group, in spite of their recriminations, and a resistance which two or three hard knocks on the head soon terminated.

Behind these women, who proceeded but slowly, on account of their stopping to recruit as they went along, walked a man with his hands in his pockets.

This man, whose face was thin and pale, of tall, lank stature, was dressed in an iron-gray coat, black waistcoat, and small-clothes; he wore a small, shabby three-cornered hat, placed obliquely over his forehead.

A long sword beat against his thin but muscular legs.

He followed, looking, listening, devouring everything with his piercing eyes, which rolled beneath his black eyelids.

"Hey! why, yes," cried Billot, "I certainly know that face, I have seen it at every riot."

"It is Maillard, the usher," said Gilbert.

"Ah! yes, that's he,—the man who walked over the plank after me at the Bastile; he was more skilful than I was, for he did not fall into the ditch."

Maillard disappeared with the women at the corner of a street.

Billot felt a great desire to do as Maillard had done, but Gilbert dragged him on to the Hôtel de Ville.

It was very certain that the gathering would go there, whether it was a gathering of men or of women. Instead of following the course of the river, he went straight to its mouth.

They knew at the Hôtel de Ville what was going on in Paris. But they scarcely noticed it. Of what importance was it, in fact, to the phlegmatic Bailly or to the aristocrat Lafayette that a woman had taken it into her head to beat a drum? It was anticipating the carnival, and that was all.

But when, at the heels of this woman who was beating the drum, they saw two or three thousand women, — when, at the sides of this crowd which was increasing every minute, they saw advancing a no less considerable troop of men, smiling in a sinister manner, and carrying their hideous weapons, — when they understood that these men were smiling at the anticipation of the evil which these women were about to commit, an evil the more irremediable from their knowing that the public forces would not attempt to stop the evil before it was committed, and that the legal powers would not punish afterwards, — they began to comprehend the serious nature of the circumstances.

These men smiled because the ill they had not dared to commit they would gladly have seen committed by the most inoffensive half of the human kind.

In about half an hour there were ten thousand women assembled on the Place de Grève.

These ladies, seeing that their numbers were sufficient, began to deliberate with their arms akimbo.

The deliberation was by no means a calm one; those who deliberated were for the most part porteresses, market-women, and prostitutes. Many of these women were royalists, and, far from thinking of doing any harm to the king and queen, would have allowed themselves to be killed to serve them. The noise which was made by this strange discussion might have been heard across the river, and by the silent towers of Notre-Dame, which, after see-

ing so many things, were preparing themselves to hear things still more curious.

The result of the deliberation was as follows : —

“Let us just go and burn the Hôtel de Ville, where so many musty papers are made out to prevent our eating our daily food.”

And in the Hôtel de Ville they were at that moment trying a baker who had sold bread to the poor under weight.

It will be easily comprehended, that the dearer bread is, the better is every operation of this nature ; only the more lucrative it is, the more dangerous.

In consequence, the admirers of lamp justice were only waiting for the baker with a new rope.

The guards of the Hôtel de Ville wished to save the unhappy culprit, and used all their strength to effect it. But for some time past it has been seen that the result but ill accorded with these philanthropic intentions.

The women rushed on these guards, dispersed them, made a forcible entry into the Hôtel de Ville, and the sack began.

They wished to throw into the Seine all they could not carry away.

The men were therefore to be cast into the water, — the building itself set fire to.

This was rather heavy work.

There was a little of everything in the Hôtel de Ville.

In the first place there were three hundred electors.

There were also the assistants.

There were the mayors of the different districts.

“It would take a long time to throw all these men into the water,” said a woman who was in a hurry to conclude the affair.

“They deserve it richly, notwithstanding,” observed another.

“Yes; but we have no time to spare.”

“Well, then,” cried another, “the quickest way will be to burn them all, and everything with them.”

They ran about looking for torches, and to get fagots to set fire to the municipality. While this was doing, in order not to lose time, they caught an abbé, the Abbé Lefèvre d'Ormesson, and strung him up.

Fortunately for the abbé, the man in the gray coat was there; he cut the rope, and the poor abbé fell from a height of seventeen feet, sprained one of his feet, and limped away amidst shouts of laughter from these Megæras.

The reason for the abbé being allowed to get away was that the torches were lighted, and the incendiaries had already these torches in their hands, and they were about to set fire to the archives; in two minutes the whole place would have been in a blaze.

Suddenly the man in the gray coat rushed forward and snatched torches and fagots out of the women's hands; the women resisted, the man lays about him right and left with the lighted torches, setting fire to their petticoats, and while they were occupied in extinguishing it, he extinguished the papers which had already been ignited.

Who, then, is this man who thus opposes the frightful will of ten thousand furious creatures?

Why then do they allow themselves to be governed by this man? They had half hanged the Abbé Lefèvre; they could hang that man more effectually, seeing that he would be no longer there to prevent them from hanging whom they pleased.

Guided by this reasoning, a frantic chorus arose from them, threatening him with death, and to these threats deeds were added.

The women surrounded the man with the gray coat, and threw a rope round his neck.

But Billot hastened forward. Billot was determined to render the same service to Maillard which Maillard had rendered the abbé.

He grasped the rope, which he cut into three pieces with a well-tempered and sharp knife, which at that moment served its owner to cut a rope, but which in an extremity,

wielded as it was by a powerful arm, might serve him still more effectually.

And while cutting the rope and getting piece by piece of it as he could, Billot cried, "Why, you unfortunate wretches, you do not then recognise Monsieur Maillard?"

At that well-known and redoubtable name all these women at once paused; they looked at each other, and wiped the perspiration from their brows.

The work had been a difficult one, and although they were in the month of October they might well perspire in accomplishing it.

"A conqueror of the Bastile!—and that conqueror Maillard! Maillard, the usher of the Châtelet! Long live Maillard!"

Threats were immediately turned into caresses; they embrace Maillard, and all cry, "Long live Maillard!"

Maillard exchanged a hearty shake of the hand and a look with Billot.

The shake of the hand implied, "We are friends!"

The look implied, "Should you ever stand in need of me, you may calculate upon me."

Maillard had resumed an influence over these women, which was so much the greater from their reflecting that they had committed some trifling wrong towards him, and which he had to pardon.

But Maillard was an old sailor on the sea of popular fury; he knew the ocean of the Faubourgs, which is raised by a breath, and calmed again by a word.

He knew how to speak to these human waves, when they allow you time enough to speak.

Moreover, the moment was auspicious for being heard. They had all remained silent around Maillard.

Maillard would not allow that Parisian women should destroy the municipal authorities, the only power to protect them; he would not allow them to annihilate the civic registers, which proved that their children were not all bastards.

The harangue of Maillard was of so novel a nature, and delivered in so loud and sarcastic a tone, that it produced a great effect.

No one should be killed, — nothing should be burnt.

But they insist on going to Versailles. It is there that exists the evil. It is there that they pass their nights in orgies, while Paris is starving. It is Versailles that devours everything. Corn and flour are deficient in Paris, because, instead of coming to Paris, they are sent direct from Corbeil to Versailles.

It would not be thus if the great baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's little boy were at Paris.

It was under these nicknames that they designated the king, the queen, and the dauphin, — those natural distributors of the people's bread.

They would go to Versailles.

Since these women are organised into troops, since they have muskets, cannon, and gunpowder, and those who have not muskets nor gunpowder have pikes and pitchforks, they ought to have a general.

"And why not? the National Guard has one."

Lafayette is the general of the men.

Maillard is the general of the women.

Monsieur Lafayette commands his do-little grenadiers, which appear to be an army of reserve, for they do so little when there is so much to be done.

Maillard will command the active army.

Without a smile, without a wink, Maillard accepts his appointment.

Maillard is general commandant of the women of Paris.

The campaign will not be a long one; but it will be decisive.

CHAPTER L.

MAILLARD A GENERAL.

It was really an army that Maillard commanded.

It had cannon, deprived of carriages and wheels, it is true; but they had been placed on carts. It had muskets, many of which were deficient in locks and triggers, it is true; but every one had a bayonet.

It had a quantity of other weapons, very awkward ones, it is true; but they were weapons.

It had gunpowder, which was carried in pocket-handkerchiefs, in caps, and in pockets; and in the midst of these living cartouche-boxes walked the artillerymen with their lighted matches.

That the whole army was not blown into the air during this extraordinary journey was certainly a perfect miracle.

Maillard at one glance appreciated the feelings of his army. He saw that it would be of no use to keep it on the square where it had assembled, nor to confine it within the walls of Paris, but to lead it on to Versailles, and, once arrived there, to prevent the harm which it might attempt to do.

This difficult, this heroic task, Maillard was determined to accomplish.

And, in consequence, Maillard descends the steps and takes the drum which was hanging from the shoulders of the young girl.

Dying with hunger, the poor young girl has no longer strength to carry it. She gives up the drum, glides along a wall, and falls with her head against a post.

A gloomy pillow, — the pillow of hunger.

Maillard asks her name. She replies that it is Madeleine Chambry. Her occupation had been carving in wood for churches. But who now thinks of endowing churches with those beautiful ornaments in wood, those beautiful statues, those magnificent basso-relievos, the masterpieces of the fifteenth century?

Dying with hunger, she had become a flower-girl in the Palais Royal.

But who thinks of purchasing flowers when money is wanting to buy even bread? Flowers — those stars which shine in the heaven of peace and abundance — flowers are withered by storms of wind and revolutions.

Being no longer able to sculpture her fruits in oak, — being no longer able to sell her roses, her jasmines and lilacs, Madeleine Chambry took a drum, and beat the terrible reveille of hunger.

She also must go to Versailles, — she who had assembled all this gloomy deputation; only, as she is too feeble to walk, she is to be carried there in a cart.

When they arrive at Versailles, they will ask that she may be admitted into the palace, with twelve other women; she is to be the famished orator, and she will there plead before the king the cause of all those that are starving.

This idea of Maillard's was much applauded.

And thus, by a word, Maillard had at once changed every hostile feeling.

They did not before this know why they were going there; they did not know what they were going to do there.

But now they know; they know that a deputation of twelve women, with Madeleine Chambry at their head, is going to supplicate the king, in the name of hunger, to take compassion on his people.

Somewhere about seven thousand women were there assembled. They commence their march, going along the quays.

But on arriving at the Tuileries loud shouts were heard.

Maillard jumped upon a post, in order to be seen by the whole of his army.

"What is it that you want?" he asked them.

"We wish to pass through the Tuileries."

"That is impossible," replied Maillard.

"And why is it impossible?" cried seven thousand voices.

"Because the Tuileries is the king's house and the king's garden; because to pass through them without the king's permission would be to insult the king; and, more than that, it would be attacking in the king's person the liberty of all."

"Well, then, be it so," say the women; "ask permission of the Swiss."¹

Maillard went to the Swiss, his cocked hat in his hand.

"My friend," said he, "will you allow these ladies to go through the Tuileries? They will only go through the archway, and will not do any injury to the plants or trees."

The only answer the Swiss gave was to draw his long rapier, and to rush upon Maillard.

Maillard drew his sword, which was full a foot shorter, and their weapons crossed.

While they were tilting at each other, a woman went behind the Swiss and gave him a fearful blow upon the head with a broom handle, and laid him at Maillard's feet.

At the same time another woman was about to run the Swiss through the body with a thrust of her bayonet.

Maillard sheathes his sword, takes that of the Swiss under one arm, the musket of the woman under the other, picks up his hat, which had fallen to the ground during the struggle, puts it upon his head, and then leads his victorious troops through the Tuileries, where, in fulfilment of the promise he had made, no sort of damage was committed by them.

Let us therefore allow them to continue their way quietly through the Cours la Reine, and go on towards Sèvres, where

¹ The porter, or gate-keeper.

they separated into two bands, and let us return to what was going on at Paris.

These seven thousand women had not failed in drowning the electors, in hanging the Abbé Lefèvre and Maillard, and burning the Hôtel de Ville, without making a certain degree of noise.

On hearing this noise, which had been re-echoed even in the most remote quarters of the capital, Lafayette had hastened towards the Hôtel de Ville.

He was passing a sort of review at the Champ de Mars. He had been on horseback from eight o'clock in the morning; he reached the square of the Hôtel de Ville just as the clock was striking twelve.

The caricatures of those days represented Lafayette as a centaur, the body of which was the famous white horse which had become proverbial. The head was that of the commandant of the National Guard.

From the commencement of the revolution, Lafayette spoke on horseback, Lafayette ate on horseback, Lafayette gave all his orders on horseback.

It often even happened that he slept on horseback.

And therefore, when by chance he could sleep on his bed, Lafayette slept soundly.

When Lafayette reached the Quai Pelletier, he was stopped by a man who had been riding at full gallop on a swift horse.

This man was Gilbert; he was going to Versailles. He was going to forewarn the king of the visit with which he was threatened, and to place himself at his orders.

In few words he related all that had happened to Lafayette.

After that he rode off again at full speed.

Lafayette went on towards the Hôtel de Ville.

Gilbert towards Versailles. Only, as the women were going on the right bank of the Seine, he took the left side of the river.

The square before the Hôtel de Ville, having been vacated by the women, was soon afterwards filled with men.

These men were National Guards, receiving pay or not receiving it, — old French guards, above all, who, having gone over to the people, had lost their privileges of king's guards, — privileges which had been inherited by the Swiss and the body guards.

To the noise made by the women had succeeded the noise of the alarm-bell and the drums, calling the people to arms.

Lafayette made his way through the crowd, alighted from his horse at the foot of the steps, and, without paying any attention to the acclamations mingled with threats excited by his presence, he began to dictate a letter to the king upon the insurrection which had taken place that morning.

He had got to the sixth line of his letter, when the door of the secretary's office was violently thrown open.

Lafayette raised his eyes. A deputation of grenadiers demanded to be received by the general.

Lafayette made a sign to the deputation that they might come in. They entered the room.

The grenadier who had been appointed spokesman of the deputation advanced to the table.

"General," said he, in a firm voice, "we are deputed by ten companies of grenadiers. We do not believe that you are a traitor, but we are betrayed. It is time that all this should come to an end. We cannot turn our bayonets against women who are asking us for bread. The Provisioning Committee is either peculating, or it is incompetent; in either the one or the other case, it is necessary that it should be changed. The people are unhappy; the source of their unhappiness is at Versailles. It is necessary to go there to fetch the king and bring him to Paris. The Flanders regiment must be exterminated, as well as the body guards, who have dared to trample under foot the national cockade. If the king be too weak to wear the crown, let him abdicate; we will crown his son. A council of regency will be nominated, and all will then go well."

Lafayette gazed at the speaker with astonishment. He had witnessed disturbances, he had wept over assassinations; but this was the first time that the breath of revolution had in reality been personally addressed to him.

This possibility that the people saw of being able to do without the king amazed him, — it did more, it confounded him.

"How is this?" cried he; "have you then formed the project of making war upon the king, and thus compelling him to abandon us?"

"General," replied the spokesman, "we love and we respect the king; we should be much hurt should he leave us, for we owe him much. But, in short, should he leave us, we have the dauphin."

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried Lafayette, "beware of what you are doing; you are attacking the crown, and it is my duty not to allow such a step."

"General," replied the National Guard, bowing, "we would for you shed the last drop of our blood. But the people are unhappy; the source of the evil is at Versailles. We must go to Versailles and bring the king to Paris. It is the people's will."

Lafayette saw that it was necessary to sacrifice his own feelings; and this was a necessity from which he never shrunk.

He descends into the centre of the square, and wishes to harangue the people; but cries of "*To Versailles! to Versailles!*" drowned his voice.

Suddenly a great tumult was heard proceeding from the Rue de la Vannerie. It is Bailly, who in his turn is coming to the Hôtel de Ville.

At the sight of Bailly, cries of "*Bread! bread! To Versailles!*" burst from every side.

Lafayette, on foot, lost amid the crowd, feels that the tide continues rising higher and higher, and will completely swallow him up.

He presses through the crowd in order to reach his horse, with the same ardour that a shipwrecked mariner swims to reach a rock.

At last he grasps his bridle, vaults on his charger's back, and urges him on towards the entrance of the Hôtel de Ville; but the way is completely closed to him; walls of men have grown up between him and it.

"Zounds, general!" cry these men; "you must remain with us."

At the same time tremendous shouts are heard of "To Versailles! to Versailles!"

Lafayette wavers, hesitates. Yes, undoubtedly, by going to Versailles he may be very useful to the king; but will he be able to master and restrain this crowd who are urging him to Versailles?

Suddenly a man descends the steps, pushes through the crowd, a letter in his hand, and makes such good use of his feet and elbows, particularly the latter, that he at length reaches Lafayette.

This man was the ever indefatigable Billot.

"Here, general," said he, "this comes from the Three Hundred."

It was thus the electors were called.

Lafayette broke the seal, and began to read it to himself; but twenty thousand voices at once cried out:—

"The letter! the letter!"

Lafayette was therefore compelled to read the letter aloud; he makes a sign to request they will be silent. Instantaneously, and as by a miracle, silence succeeds to the immense tumult, and Lafayette reads the following letter, not one word of which was lost by the people:—

"Seeing the state of circumstances and the desire of the people, and on the *representation* of the commandant-general that it was impossible to refuse, the electors assembled in council authorise the commandant-general, and even order him, to repair to Versailles.

"Four commissaries of the district will accompany him."

Poor Lafayette had absolutely represented nothing to the electors, who were by no means disinclined to leave some portion of the responsibility of the events which were about to happen on his shoulders. But the people, they believed that he had really made representations, and this coincided so precisely with their views that they made the air ring with their shouts of "Long live Lafayette!"

Lafayette turned pale, but in his turn repeated, "To Versailles!"

Fifteen thousand men followed him with a more silent enthusiasm, but which was at the same time more terrible, than that of the women who had gone forward as the advanced guard.

All these people were to assemble again at Versailles, to ask the king for the crumbs which fell from the table of the body guards during the orgies of the 1st of October.

CHAPTER LI.

VERSAILLES.

As usual, they were completely ignorant at Versailles of what was going on at Paris.

After the scenes which we have described, and at the occurrence of which the queen had openly congratulated herself, her Majesty was reposing herself after her fatigue.

She had an army, she had her devotees, she had counted her enemies, she wished to begin the contest.

Had she not the defeat of the 14th July to avenge? Had she not the king's journey to Paris, a journey from which he had returned with the tricoloured cockade in his hat, to forget, and to make her court forget it also?

Poor woman! she but little expected the journey which she herself would be shortly compelled to take.

Since her altercation with Charny, she had scarcely spoken to him. She affected to treat Andrée with her former friendliness, which had for a time been deadened in her heart, but which was forever extinguished in that of her rival.

As to Charny, she never turned towards or looked at him but when she was compelled to address herself to him upon matters regarding his service, or to give him an order.

It was not a family disgrace; for on the very morning on which the Parisians were to leave Paris to come to Versailles the queen was seen talking affectionately with young Georges de Charny, the second of the three brothers, who, in contradiction to Olivier, had given such warlike

counsels to the queen on the arrival of the news of the capture of the Bastile.

And in fact, at nine in the morning, as the young officer was crossing the gallery to announce to the huntsman that the king intended going out, when Marie Antoinette, returning from mass in the chapel, saw him, she called him to her.

"Where are you running thus, monsieur?" said she to him.

"As soon as I perceived your Majesty, I ran no longer," replied Georges; "on the contrary, I instantly stopped, and I was waiting humbly for the honour you have done me in addressing me."

"That does not prevent you, monsieur, from replying to my question, and telling me whither you are going."

"Madame," replied Georges, "I am on duty to-day, and form part of the escort. His Majesty hunts to-day, and I am going to the huntsman to make arrangements for the meet."

"Ah! the king hunts again to-day," said the queen, looking at the big dark clouds which were rolling on from Paris towards Versailles. "He is wrong to do so. The weather appears to be threatening; does it not, Andrée?"

"Yes, madame," absently replied the Countess de Charny.

"Are you not of that opinion, monsieur?"

"I am so, madame; but such is the king's will."

"May the king's will be done, in the woods and on the highroads," replied the queen, with that gayety of manner which was habitual with her, and which neither the sorrows of the heart nor political events could ever deprive her of.

Then, turning towards Andrée.

"It is but just that he should have this amusement," said the queen to her in a whisper.

And then aloud to Georges, —

"Can you tell me, monsieur, where the king intends hunting?"

"In the Meudon wood, madame."

"Well, then, accompany him, and watch carefully over his safety."

At this moment the Count de Charny had entered the room; he smiled kindly at Andrée, and, shaking his head, ventured to say to the queen, —

"That is a recommendation which my brother will not fail to remember, madame; not in the midst of the king's pleasures, but in the midst of his dangers."

At the sound of the voice, which had struck upon her ear before her eyes had warned her of the presence of Charny, Marie Antoinette started, and turning round, —

"I should have been much astonished," said she, with disdainful harshness, "if such a saying had not proceeded from the Count Olivier de Charny."

"And why so, madame?" respectfully inquired the count.

"Because it prophesies misfortune, monsieur."

Andrée turned pale on seeing that the colour fled from her husband's cheeks.

He bowed without offering a reply.

Then, on a look from his wife, who appeared to be amazed at his being so patient, —

"I am really extremely unfortunate," he said, "since I no longer know how to speak to the queen without offending her."

The *no longer* was emphasised in the same manner as a skilful actor would emphasise the more important syllables.

The ear of the queen was too well exercised not to perceive at once the stress which Charny had laid upon his words.

"*No longer!*" she exclaimed sharply, "*no longer*; what mean you by *no longer*?"

"I have again spoken unfortunately, it would appear," said De Charny unaffectedly.

And he exchanged a look with Andrée, which the queen this time perceived.

She in her turn became pale, and then her teeth firmly set together with rage.

"The saying is bad," she exclaimed, "when the intention is bad."

"The ear is hostile," said Charny, "when the thought is hostile."

And after this retort, which was more just than respectful, he remained silent.

"I shall wait to reply," said the queen, "until the Count de Charny is more happy in his attacks."

"And I," said De Charny, "shall wait to attack until the queen shall be more fortunate than she has lately been in servants."

Andrée eagerly seized her husband's hand, and was preparing to leave the room with him.

A glance from the queen restrained her. She had observed this gesture.

"But, in fine, what has *your husband* to say to me?" asked the queen.

"He had intended telling your Majesty that, having been sent to Paris yesterday by the king, he had found the city in a most extraordinary state of ferment."

"Again!" cried the queen; "and on what account? The Parisians have taken the Bastille, and are now occupied in demolishing it. What can they require more? Answer me, Monsieur de Charny."

"That is true, madame," replied the count; "but as they cannot eat the stones, they are calling out for bread,—they say that they are hungry."

"That they are hungry! that they are hungry!" exclaimed the queen; "and what would they have us do in that respect?"

"There was a time," observed Charny, "when the queen was the first to compassionate the sufferings of the people; there was a time when she would ascend even to the garrets of the poor, and the prayers of the poor ascended from the garrets to God, with blessings on her head."

"Yes," bitterly replied the queen, "and I was well

rewarded, was I not, for the compassion which I felt for the misery of others? One of the greatest misfortunes which ever befell me was in consequence of having ascended to one of these garrets."

"Because your Majesty was once deceived," said Charny, "because she bestowed her favours and her grace upon a miserable wretch, ought she to consider all human nature upon a level with that infamous woman? Ah, madame! madame! how at that time were you beloved!"

The queen darted a furious glance at Charny.

"But, finally," she said, "what did actually take place in Paris yesterday? Tell me only things that you have yourself seen, monsieur; I wish to be sure of the truth of your words."

"What I saw, madame! I saw a portion of the population crowded together on the quays, vainly awaiting the arrival of flour. I saw others standing in long files at the bakers' doors, uselessly waiting for bread. What I saw was a starving people; husbands looking sorrowfully at their wives, mothers looking sorrowfully at their children. What I saw! I saw clinched and threatening hands held up in the direction of Versailles. Ah, madame! madame! the dangers of which I just now spoke to you are approaching, — the opportunity of dying for your Majesty, — a happiness which my brother and myself will be the first to claim. I fear the day is not far distant when it will be offered to us."

The queen turned her back to Charny with an impatient gesture, and went to a window, and placed her pale though burning face against a pane of glass. This window looked into the marble courtyard.

She had scarcely done this, when she was seen to start.

"Andrée!" cried she, "come here and see who is this horseman coming towards us; he appears to be the bearer of very urgent news."

Andrée went to the window, but almost immediately recoiled a step from it, turning very pale.

"Ah, madame!" cried she, in a tone of reproach.

Charny hastened towards the window; he had minutely observed all that had passed.

"That horseman," said he, looking alternately at the queen and at Andrée, "is Doctor Gilbert."

"Ah! that is true," said the queen; and in a tone which rendered it impossible, even to Andrée, to judge whether the queen had drawn her to the window in one of those fits of feminine vengeance to which poor Marie Antoinette sometimes gave way, or whether her eyes, weakened by watching and the tears she had shed, could no longer recognise, at a certain distance, even those whom it was her interest to recognise.

An ice-like silence immediately ensued, and the three principal characters in this scene interrogated and replied to one another merely by looks.

It was in fact Gilbert who was coming, bringing with him the untoward news which Charny had predicted.

Although he had hurriedly alighted from his horse, although he had rapidly ascended the staircase, although the three agitated faces of the queen, Andrée, and Charny were turned towards the door which led to this staircase, and by which the doctor ought to have entered the room, this door did not open.

There was, then, on the part of these three persons, an anxious suspense of some minutes.

Suddenly a door on the opposite side of the room was opened, and an officer came in.

"Madame," said he, "Doctor Gilbert, who has come for the purpose of conversing with the king on important and urgent matters, demands to have the honour of being received by your Majesty, the king having set out for Meudon an hour ago."

"Let him come in!" said the queen, fixing on the door a look which was firm even to harshness, while Andrée, as if naturally she sought to find a supporter in her husband, drew back, and supported herself on the count's arm.

Gilbert soon made his appearance on the threshold of the door.

CHAPTER LII.

THE FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER.

GILBERT cast a glance on the several personages whom we have placed on the stage, and, advancing respectfully towards Marie Antoinette, —

“Will the queen permit me,” said he, “in the absence of her august husband, to communicate to her the news of which I am the bearer?”

“Speak, monsieur,” said Marie Antoinette. “On seeing you coming at so rapid a pace, I summoned up all my fortitude, for I felt well assured that you were bringing me some fearful news.”

“Would the queen have preferred that I should have allowed her to be surprised? Forewarned, the queen, with that sound judgment, that elevated mind by which she is characterised, would advance to meet the danger; and then perhaps the danger might retreat before her.”

“Let us see, monsieur, — what is this danger?”

“Madame, seven or eight thousand women have set out from Paris, and are coming armed to Versailles.”

“Seven or eight thousand women?” cried the queen, with an air of contempt.

“Yes; but they will, most likely, have stopped on the way; and perhaps on arriving here their numbers will amount to fifteen or twenty thousand.”

“And for what purpose are they coming?”

“They are hungry, madame, and they are coming to ask the king for bread.”

The queen turned towards Charny.

"Alas! madame," said the count, "that which I predicted has now happened."

"What is to be done?" asked Marie Antoinette.

"The king should, in the first place, be informed of it," said Gilbert.

The queen turned quickly towards him.

"The king! Oh no!" she cried, "what good purpose would it answer to expose him to such a meeting?"

This cry burst forth from the heart of Marie Antoinette almost involuntarily. It was a convincing manifestation of the intrepidity of the queen, of her consciousness of possessing a firmness which was altogether personal to her, and at the same time of her consciousness of her husband's weakness, which she ought not to have admitted even to herself, and should not, more particularly, have revealed to strangers.

But was Charny a stranger? and Gilbert, was he a stranger?

No; did not those two men, on the contrary, appear to be elected by Providence, the one to be the safeguard of the queen, the other to protect the king?

Charny replied at once to the queen and to Gilbert; he resumed all his empire, for he had made the sacrifice of his pride.

"Madame," said he, "Monsieur Gilbert is right; it is necessary that the king should be informed of this occurrence. The king is still beloved; the king will present himself to these women; he will harangue them, he will disarm them."

"But," observed the queen, "who will undertake to give this information to the king? The road between this and Meudon is no doubt already intersected, and it would be a dangerous enterprise."

"The king is in the forest of Meudon?"

"Yes, and it is probable the roads —"

"Your Majesty will deign to consider me as a military man," said Charny unostentatiously; "a soldier, and one whose duty it is to expose his life —"

And having said these words, he did not wait for a reply ; he listened not to the sigh which escaped the queen ; but ran rapidly down the staircase, jumped upon one of the guards' horses, and hastened towards Meudon, accompanied by two cavaliers.

He had scarcely disappeared, and had replied by a sign to a farewell gesture which Andrée addressed to him from the window, when a distant noise, which resembled the roaring of the waves in a storm, made the queen listen anxiously. This noise appeared to proceed from the farthest trees on the Paris road, which, from the apartment in which the queen was, could be seen towering above the mist at some distance from the last houses of Versailles.

The horizon soon became as threatening to the eye as it had been to the ear ; a hail shower began to checker the dark gray haze.

And yet, notwithstanding the threatening state of the heavens, crowds of persons were entering Versailles.

Messengers arrived continually at the palace.

Every messenger brought intelligence of numerous columns being on their way from Paris, and every one thought of the joys and the easy triumphs of the preceding days ; some of them feeling at heart a regret that was akin to remorse, others an instinctive terror.

The soldiers were anxious, and, looking at each other, slowly took up their arms. Like drunken people, who endeavour to shake off the effects of wine, the officers, demoralised by the visible uneasiness of their soldiers and the murmurs of the crowd, with difficulty breathed in this atmosphere, impregnated as it was with misfortunes which were about to be attributed to them.

On their side, the body guards — somewhere about three hundred men — coldly mounted their horses, and with that hesitation which seizes men of the sword when they feel they have to deal with enemies whose mode of attack is unknown to them.

What could they do against women who had set out

threatening and with arms, but who had arrived disarmed, and who could no longer raise even their hands, so enervated were they with fatigue, so emaciated were they by hunger ?

And yet, at all hazards, they formed themselves into line, drew their sabres, and waited.

At last, the women made their appearance ; they had come by two roads. Half-way between Paris and Versailles they had separated, one party coming by Saint-Cloud, the other by Sèvres.

Before they separated, eight loaves had been divided among them ; it was all that could be found at Sèvres.

Thirty-two pounds of bread for seven thousand persons !

On arriving at Versailles they could scarcely drag themselves along. More than three fourths of them had scattered their weapons along the road. Maillard had induced the remaining fourth to leave their arms in the first houses they came to in Versailles.

Then, on entering into the town,—

“Come, now,” said he, “that they may not doubt that we are friends to royalty, let us sing, ‘Vive Henri Quatre!’”

And in a dying tone, and with voices that had not strength enough to ask for bread, they chanted the royal national air.

The astonishment was therefore great at the palace when, instead of shouts and threats, they heard them singing the loyal air,—when, above all, they saw the female choristers staggering, for hunger has somewhat the effect of drunkenness, and these wretched women, leaning their haggard, pale, and livid faces, begrimed with dirt, down which the rain and perspiration were streaming, against the gilded railings,—faces which appeared to be more than doubled by the number of hands which grasped those railings for support.

After a time would now and then escape from these horribly fantastic groups lugubrious howlings ; in the

midst of these agonised faces would appear eyes flashing lightnings.

Also, from time to time, all these hands, abandoning the railings which sustained them, were thrust through the space between them, and stretched forth towards the palace.

Some of them were open and trembling, — these were soliciting.

Others were clinched and nervously agitated, — these were threatening.

Oh, the picture was a gloomy one!

The rain and mud, — so much for the heavens and earth.

Hunger and threatening gestures, — so much for the besiegers.

Pity and doubt, — such were the feelings of the defenders.

While waiting the return of Louis XVI., agitated, but firmly resolved, the queen gave orders for the defence of the palace. By degrees, the courtiers, the officers, and the high dignitaries of the state grouped themselves around her.

In the midst of them she perceived Monsieur de Saint-Priest, the minister for Paris.

“Go and inquire, monsieur,” said she to him, “what it is these people want.”

Monsieur de Saint-Priest immediately went down the staircase, crossed the courtyard, and approached the railing.

“What is it that you demand?” said he to the women.

“Bread! bread! bread!” simultaneously cried a thousand voices.

“Bread!” replied Monsieur de Saint-Priest, impatiently; “when you had but one master, you never were in want of bread. Now that you have twelve hundred, you see to what they have reduced you.”

And Monsieur de Saint-Priest withdrew amidst the threatening shouts of these famished creatures, giving strict orders that the gates should be kept closed.

But a deputation advances, before which it is absolutely necessary that the gates should be thrown open.

Maillard had presented himself to the National Assembly in the name of the women; he had succeeded in persuading them that the president, with a deputation of twelve women, should proceed to the palace to make a statement to the king of the position of affairs.

At the moment when the deputation, with Mounier at its head, left the Assembly, the king returned to the palace at full gallop, entering it by the stable-yard.

Charny had found him in the forest of Meudon.

"Ah! it is you, monsieur," cried the king, on perceiving him. "Is it me whom you are seeking?"

"Yes, sire."

"What then has happened? You seem to have ridden hard."

"Sire, there are at this moment ten thousand women at Versailles, who have come from Paris, and who are crying for bread."

The king shrugged his shoulders, but it was more from a feeling of compassion than of disdain.

"Alas!" said he, "if I had bread for them I should not have waited their coming from Paris to ask it of me."

But without making any farther observation, he cast a mournful look towards the place where the hounds were continuing their chase of the stag, which he was obliged to abandon.

"Well, then, monsieur, let us go to Versailles," said he. And he rode off towards Versailles.

He had just arrived there, as we have said, when frightful cries were heard proceeding from the Place d'Armes.

"What is the meaning of that?" inquired the king.

"Sire," cried Gilbert, entering the room, pale as death, "they are your guards, who, led on by Monsieur Georges de Charny, are charging upon the President of the National Assembly, and a deputation which he is leading here."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the king.

"Listen to the cries of those whom they are assassinating. Look! look at the people who are flying in terror!"

"Let the gates be thrown open," cried the king. "I will receive the deputation."

"But, sire!" exclaimed the queen.

"Let the gates be opened," said Louis XVI.; "the palaces of kings ought to be considered as asylums."

"Alas! excepting, perhaps, for kings themselves," said the queen.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE EVENING OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH OF OCTOBER.

CHARNY and Gilbert rushed down stairs.

"In the name of the king!" cried the one.

"In the name of the queen!" cried the other.

And both of them added, —

"Open the gates!"

But this order was no sooner executed than the President of the National Assembly was thrown down in the courtyard, and trampled under foot.

Two of the women forming the deputation were wounded close by his side.

Gilbert and Charny threw themselves into the crowd. These two men — the one proceeding from the highest class of society, the other from the lowest — met, working in the same cause.

The one wishes to save the queen, from his ardent love for the queen; the other wishes to save the king, from his love for royalty.

On the gates being opened, the women rushed into the courtyard, and had thrown themselves into the ranks of the body guards and those of the Flanders regiment. They threaten, they entreat, they caress. Who could resist women when they implore those whom they address in the name of their sisters, their mothers?

"Room, gentlemen, room for the deputation!" cried Gilbert.

And all the ranks were immediately opened to allow Mounier to pass with the unhappy women he was about to present to the king.

The king, having been informed by Charny, who had hastened to him, waited for the deputation in the room contiguous to the chapel.

It was Mounier who was to speak in the name of the Assembly.

It was Madeleine Chambry, the flower-girl, who had beaten the drum, who was to speak in the name of the women.

Mounier said a few words to the king, and presented to him the young flower-girl.

The latter stepped forward a pace or two, and wished to speak, but could only utter these words:—

“Sire, bread!”

And she fell fainting to the ground.

“Help! help!” cried the king.

Andrée hurried forward, and handed her smelling-bottle to the king.

“Ah! madame,” said Charny to the queen, in a reproachful tone.

The queen turned pale, and withdrew to her own apartment.

“Prepare the equipages,” said she, “the king and I are going to Rambouillet.”

During this time poor Madeleine Chambry was recovering her senses, and, finding herself in the king’s arms, who was making her inhale the salts he held in his hand, she uttered a cry of shame, and wished to kiss his hand.

But the king prevented her.

“My lovely child,” said he, “allow me to embrace you; you are well worth the trouble.”

“Oh sire! sire! since you are so kind,” said the young girl, “give an order—”

“What order?” inquired the king.

“An order to have wheat sent to Paris, so that famine may cease.”

“My dear child,” said the king, “I will willingly sign the order you request, but, in truth, I am afraid it will not be of much service to you.”

The king seated himself at a table and began to write, when suddenly a single musket-shot was heard, followed by a tolerably quick fire of musketry.

"Ah! good God! good God!" exclaimed the king, "what can have happened? See what it is, Monsieur Gilbert."

A second charge upon another group of women had been made, and this charge had brought about the isolated musket-shot and the volley which had been heard.

The isolated musket-shot had been fired by a man in the crowd, and had broken the arm of Monsieur de Savonnières, a lieutenant in the guards, at the moment when that arm was raised to strike a young soldier, who was behind a sentry-box, and who, with uplifted and unarmed hands, was protecting a woman who was on her knees behind him.

This musket-shot was replied to on the part of the guards, by five or six shots from their carbines.

Two of the shots told. A woman fell dead.

Another was carried off seriously wounded.

The people became irritated, and in their turn two of the body guards fell from their horses.

At the same instant cries of "Room! room!" are heard; they were the men from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who were arriving, dragging with them three pieces of artillery, with which they formed a battery opposite to the principal gate of the palace.

Fortunately the rain was falling in torrents; the match is uselessly applied to the touchholes of these guns; the priming, completely soddened by the rain, does not ignite.

At this moment a voice whispers into the ear of Gilbert:—

"Monsieur de Lafayette is coming; he cannot be more than half a league from Versailles."

Gilbert in vain attempts to discover who has given him this information; but from whomsoever it might come, it was valuable.

He looks around him, and sees a horse without a rider, — it belonged to one of the two guards who had just been killed.

He leaps into the saddle, and sets off in a gallop on the road towards Paris.

The second horse without a rider follows him; but he had scarcely gone twenty paces over the square, when the horse is stopped by the bridle. Gilbert believes his intention has been divined, and that some one wishes to pursue him. He casts a look behind him as he rides off.

They were not thinking of him at all; but they were hungry. They think of nothing but obtaining food, and the poor horse is instantly butchered by a hundred knives.

In a moment it is cut into a hundred pieces.

During this time the king had been informed, as Gilbert had been, that General Lafayette was about to arrive.

He had signed, at the request of Mounier, his acceptance of the Rights of Man.

He had signed, at the request of Madeleine Chambry, the order for corn to be sent to Paris.

Furnished with this decree and this order, which it was thought would have tranquillised all minds, Maillard, Madeleine Chambry, and a thousand of the women had set out on their return to Paris.

Just beyond the first houses of Versailles they met Lafayette, who, pressed by Gilbert, was riding at full speed, having ordered the National Guards to follow him as quickly as possible.

"Long live the king!" cried Maillard and the women, waving the decrees above their heads.

"What was it, then, you were saying to me of the dangers to which his Majesty is exposed?" said Lafayette, with astonishment.

"Come on, general, come on," cried Gilbert, continuing to urge him onwards; "you shall yourself judge of them."

And Lafayette spurred on his horse.

The National Guards entered Versailles with drums beating and colours flying.

At the first sounds of the drum which penetrated the palace, the king felt that some one was respectfully touching his arm.

He turned round; it was Andrée.

"Ah! is it you, Madame de Charny?" said he; "what is the queen doing?"

"Sire, the queen sends to entreat that you will leave Versailles, that you will not wait for the Parisians. At the head of your guards and the soldiers of the Flanders regiment, you can go anywhere."

"Are you of that opinion, Monsieur de Charny?" inquired the king.

"Yes, sire, if you at once determine on passing the frontier; but if not—"

"If not?"

"It would be better to remain here."

The king shook his head.

He remains, not because he has the courage to remain, but because he has not firmness to decide on going.

He murmured in a low tone, —

"A fugitive king! — a fugitive king!"

Then, turning to Andrée, —

"Go and tell the queen to set out alone."

Andrée left the room to execute her mission.

Ten minutes afterwards the queen came in, and seated herself by the king's side.

"For what purpose have you come here, madame?" asked Louis XVI.

"To die with you, sire," replied the queen.

"Ah!" murmured Charny, "it is now that she is truly beautiful."

The queen shuddered; she had heard him. .

"I believe, indeed, it would be better that I should die than live," said she, looking at him.

At that moment the march of the National Guards was heard under the windows of the palace.

Gilbert rapidly entered the room.

"Sire," said he to the king, "you have nothing further to apprehend, Monsieur de Lafayette is below."

The king did not like Monsieur de Lafayette, but he did not carry his feelings further than dislike.

With regard to the queen, it was a very different matter. She frankly hated him, and took no pains to conceal her hatred.

The result of this was that Gilbert received no reply, although he had believed that the intelligence he had communicated was the most favourable he could have brought at such a moment.

But Gilbert was not a man to allow himself to be intimidated by royal silence.

"Your Majesty has heard?" cried he to the king, in a firm tone. "Monsieur de Lafayette is below, and places himself at your Majesty's orders."

The queen continued silent.

The king made an effort to restrain his feelings.

"Let some one go and tell him that I thank him, and invite him, in my name, to come upstairs."

An officer bowed and left the room.

The queen drew back a step or two.

But the king, with a gesture that was almost imperative, made her resume her position.

The courtiers formed themselves into two groups.

Charny and Gilbert, with two or three others, remained near the king.

All the rest retreated behind the queen's chair, and arranged themselves in a half-circle round her.

The footsteps of a man, ascending the staircase alone, were heard, and Monsieur de Lafayette appeared in the doorway.

In the midst of the silence which his appearance produced, a voice issuing from the group surrounding the queen pronounced these words:—

"There is Cromwell!"

Lafayette smiled.

"Cromwell would not have presented himself alone to Charles the First," said he.

Louis XVI. turned frowningly towards these terrible friends, who wished to make an enemy of a man who had hastened to his assistance.

Then, addressing Monsieur de Charny, —

“Count,” said he, “I shall remain. Monsieur de Lafayette being here, I have nothing more to fear. Order the troops to withdraw to Rambouillet. The National Guards will be posted at the exterior ditches, the body guards at those immediately near the palace.”

Then, turning to Lafayette, —

“Come with me, general, I have to speak with you.”

And as Gilbert was taking a step towards the door, —

“No, doctor,” cried the king, “you will not be one too many; come with us.”

And showing the way to Lafayette and Gilbert, he went into a cabinet, into which they both followed him.

The queen followed them with her eyes, and when the door had closed behind them, —

“Ah!” cried she, “it was to-day that we ought to have escaped from this. To-day there was still time. To-morrow, perhaps, it will be too late.”

And she, in her turn, left the room, to withdraw to her own apartments.

A great light, similar to that of an extensive conflagration, illuminated the windows of the palace.

It was an immense bonfire, at which the Parisians were roasting the different joints of the horse they had killed.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE NIGHT OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH OF OCTOBER.

THE night was tolerably tranquil. The Assembly continued its sittings till three o'clock in the morning.

At three o'clock, and before the members separated, they sent two of their ushers, who took a round through Versailles, visited the environs of the palace, and then went round the park.

All was, or all appeared to be, quiet.

The queen had wished to leave the palace by the gate which communicated with Trianon, but the National Guards had refused to allow her to pass.

She had alleged her fears, and she had been answered that she was safer at Versailles than she could be elsewhere.

She had, in consequence, retired to her apartments; and she, in fact, felt reassured, when she saw that she was protected by the most faithful of her guards.

At her door she had found Georges de Charny. He was armed, and leaning upon the small musketoon used by the guards as well as the dragoons. This was unusual; the guards in the interior of the palace stood sentry with their sabres only.

On perceiving him, the queen went up to him.

"Ah! it is you, baron," she said.

"Yes, madame."

"Always faithful."

"Am I not at my post?"

"Who placed you here?"

"My brother, madame."

"And where is your brother?"

"He is with the king."

"And why with the king?"

"Because he is the head of the family," he said; "and in that capacity has the right to die for the king, who is the head of the state."

"Yes," said Marie Antoinette, with a certain degree of bitterness, "while you have only the right of dying for the queen."

"That would be great happiness for me," said the young man, bowing, "should God permit me to fulfil that duty."

The queen made a step to withdraw, but a suspicion was gnawing at her heart.

She stopped, and, half turning her head, —

"And — the countess," she inquired, "what has become of her?"

"The countess, madame, came in about ten minutes since, and she has ordered a bed to be prepared for her in your Majesty's antechamber."

The queen bit her lips.

Whenever she had occasion to make inquiry with regard to any of the De Charny family, she was always sure to find that they were rigidly attending to their duties, be they what they might.

"Thanks, monsieur," said the queen, with a charming gesture of the head and hand at the same time, "thanks for your watching so carefully over the queen. You will in my name thank your brother for watching over the king so carefully."

And after saying this she went to her own room. In the antechamber she found Andrée, not lying down, but still sitting up and respectfully awaiting her return.

She could not prevent herself from holding out her hand to her.

"I have just been thanking your brother-in-law, Georges, countess," she said, "and I told him to thank your husband, and I now thank you, in turn."

Andrée made a low curtesy, and stood aside to allow the queen to pass, who then went into her bedroom.

The queen did not tell her to follow her. This devotedness, from which she felt affection was withdrawn, and which, however icy cold it might be, she knew would exist till death, weighed heavily upon her feelings.

As we have before said, at three in the morning everything was quiet in the palace at Versailles.

Gilbert had left it with Monsieur de Lafayette, who had been on horseback for twelve hours, and who was so much fatigued that he could scarcely stand. On leaving the palace he met Billot, who had accompanied the National Guards. He had seen Gilbert set off; he had thought that Gilbert might have occasion for him at Versailles, and he had therefore followed him, like the dog who runs to rejoin his master who has left the house without him.

The Assembly, reassured by the report made to it by its ushers, had adjourned.

It was hoped that this tranquillity would not be disturbed during the night.

But the calculation was wrong.

In almost all popular movements by which great revolutions are prepared, there is a pausing time, during which people believe that all is terminated, and that they may sleep quietly.

They deceive themselves.

Behind the men who make the first commotion, there are others who are awaiting the completion of this first movement, calculating that the first, either from fatigue or being satisfied, do not desire to proceed farther, and therefore repose.

It is then that, in their turn, these unknown men, the mysterious agents of fatal passions, glide darkly in the shade, take up the movement where it had been abandoned, and urge it onward to its utmost limits; and when they awake those who have opened out the way to them, and have lain down half-way on the road, believing that their journey was performed, that the end was gained, they are terrified at the frightful progress which has been made.

There was a very different impulsion during this terrible night, and given by two troops who had arrived at Versailles,—the one in the evening, the other during the night.

The first had come because it was hungry, and it asked for bread.

The second had come from hatred, and asked for vengeance.

We know who it was led on the first,—Maillard and Lafayette.

But now who was it that led on the second? History mentions not their names; but as history has failed in this, tradition names:—

MARAT.

We already know him; we have seen him at the fêtes given at the marriage of Marie Antoinette, cutting off legs and arms on the Place Louis XV.; we have seen him in the square before the Hôtel de Ville, urging on the citizens.

At length we see him gliding along in the night, like those wolves who prowl along the sheepfolds, waiting until the shepherds shall be asleep, to venture on their sanguinary work.

VERRIÈRE.

As to this one, we have mentioned his name for the first time. He was a deformed dwarf, a hideous hunchback, but whose legs appeared immeasurably long in proportion to his body. At every storm which disturbed the depths of society, this sanguinary monster was seen to rise with the scum and agitate himself upon its surface. Two or three times during the most terrible tumults he was seen passing through Paris, huddled upon a black charger, and similar to one of the figures in the Apocalypse, or to one of those inconceivable demons to which the pencil of Callot has given birth in his picture of the temptations of Saint Anthony.

One day at a club, and mounted on the table, he was attacking, threatening, and accusing Danton. It was at

the period when the popularity of the man of the 2d of September was vacillating. Danton felt that this venomous attack of Verrière would altogether complete his ruin. He felt that he was lost, — lost like the lion who perceives the hideous head of a serpent at two inches from his lips.

He looked around him, seeking either a weapon or some one to back him. Fortunately, he caught sight of another little hunchback; he immediately caught him under the arms, raised him, and placed him upon the table immediately opposite his humpbacked brother.

"My friend," said he to him, "reply to that gentleman; I yield the floor to you."

The whole assembly roared with laughter, and Danton was saved — for that time at least.

There were then, according to tradition, Marat, Verrière, and besides them, —

THE DUKE D'AIGUILLON.

The Duke d'Aiguillon; that is to say, one of the most inveterate enemies of the queen.

The Duke d'Aiguillon disguised as a woman.

And who was it said this? Everybody.

The Abbé Delille and the Abbé Maury, — these two abbés who so little resemble each other.

To the first was attributed the famous line, —

"As a man, he's a coward; as a woman, an assassin."

As to the Abbé Maury, that is another affair.

A fortnight after the occurrence of the events we are relating, the Duke d'Aiguillon met him on the terrace of the Feuillans, and was about to accost him.

"Keep on your way, strumpet!" said the Abbé Maury, and he majestically left the duke perfectly astounded.

It was therefore said that these three men, Marat, Verrière, and the Duke d'Aiguillon arrived at Versailles at about four o'clock in the morning.

They were leading the second troop of which we have spoken.

It was composed of men who follow in the wake of those who combat to conquer.

They, on the contrary, come to pillage and to assassinate. They had undoubtedly assassinated a little at the Bastile, but they had not pillaged at all.

Versailles offered a delightful compensation.

About half-past five in the morning the palace was startled from its sleep.

A musket-shot had been fired in the marble courtyard.

Five or six hundred men had suddenly presented themselves at the gate, and, exciting, animating, pushing on each other, some of them had climbed over the railings, while the others, by a united effort, at length forced open the gate.

It was then that a shot fired by the sentinel had given the alarm.

One of the assailants fell dead. His bleeding corpse was stretched upon the pavement.

This shot had divided this group of pillagers, whose aim was to obtain possession of the plate in the palace; and that of some of them, perhaps, to seize upon the king's crown.

Separated as by the blow of an immense hatchet, the crowd is divided into two groups.

One of the groups goes to attack the queen's apartments, the other ascends towards the chapel,—that is to say, towards the apartments of the king.

Let us first follow the one proceeding towards the king's apartments.

You have seen the waves rising when a high tide is setting in, have you not? Well, then, the popular wave is similar to it, with this sole difference, that it keeps on advancing, without receding.

The whole of the king's guards at that moment consisted of a sentinel, who was guarding the door, and an officer, who rushed precipitately out of the antechamber, armed with a halberd which he had snatched from the hand of a terrified Swiss.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel: "who goes there?"

And as no answer was given, and as the flood of men still ascended, —

“Who goes there?” he cried for the third time.

And he levelled his musket.

The officer feels at once what would be the result of a shot fired in the apartments; he strikes up the sentinel's gun, and, rushing towards the assailants, he places his halberd across the top of the staircase, thus completely preventing any one from passing.

“Gentlemen! gentlemen!” cried he, “what do you want? What do you require?”

“Nothing, nothing,” said several voices; “let us pass, we are good friends of his Majesty.”

“You are good friends of his Majesty, and you make war on him?”

This time there was no answer, — a laugh and nothing else.

A man seized the stock of the halberd that the officer would not let go of. To make him quit his hold, the man struck his hand.

The officer snatched the halberd from the hands of his adversary, grasped the oaken stock with both of his, and, dealing his adversary a blow on the head with all his strength, broke his skull.

The violence of the blow broke the halberd in two.

The officer, consequently, had two arms instead of one, — a stick and a poniard.

He whirled the stick round, — struck with the poniard. During this time the sentry had opened the door of the antechamber and called for assistance.

Five or six guards came out.

“Gentlemen! gentlemen!” said the sentinel, “assist Monsieur de Charny!”

The sabres sprang from the scabbard, glittered for an instant in the light of the lamp which burnt above the staircase, and, to the right and left of Charny, furiously attacked the assailants.

Cries of pain were heard, blood flowed, the wave of people retreated down the steps, and showed them covered with blood.

The door of the antechamber opened again, and the sentinel cried, —

“Enter, gentlemen; the king orders it!”

The guards profited by this moment of confusion among the crowd. They rushed towards the door. Charny entered last. The gate closes upon him, and the two large bolts shoot into their places.

A thousand blows are struck at once on the door. It would hold good, however, for ten minutes.

Ten minutes! During these ten minutes some assistance might arrive.

Let us see what the queen is doing.

The second group has darted towards the small apartments; but the staircase is narrow, scarce two people can pass at once.

Georges de Charny watches there!

At the third “Who goes there?” no answer, he fires.

At the sound of the report the queen’s door opens.

Andrée comes out, pale but calm.

“What is it?” asked she.

“Madame,” cried Georges, “save her Majesty! it is her life they want! I am opposed to a thousand, but I will hold out as long as possible. Quick, quick!” Then, as the assailants precipitated themselves on him, he shut the door, crying, “Draw the bolt! draw the bolt! I shall live long enough to allow the queen to fly!” And, turning, he pierced the first two he met in the corridor with his bayonet.

The queen had heard everything.

Two of her women, Madame Hugué and Madame Thibault, were dressing her. Then, half dressed, the two women conducted her through a corridor to the king, while, calm and indifferent to her danger, Andrée drew bolt after bolt, as she followed the steps of Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER LV.

THE MORNING.

BETWIXT the two apartments a man waited for the queen. This man was Charny.

"The king!" cried Marie Antoinette, on seeing the blood on the dress of the young man. "The king! monsieur, you promised to save the king!"

"The king is saved, madame," replied Charny.

And, looking towards the doors which the queen had left open, in order to reach the *Ceil-de-Bœuf*,¹ where at this time were assembled the queen, Madame Royale,² the dauphin, and a few guards, Charny was about to ask what had become of Andrée, when his eyes met those of the queen.

This look stopped the question which was about to issue from his lips.

¹ The *Ceil-de-Bœuf*, which has so frequently been mentioned in this book, had an historical interest. It was an oval room in the great palace of Versailles, and its history, compiled recently by one of the most distinguished writers of France, comprises more pages than the annals of many a European kingdom. In the coterie of the Regent Duke of Orleans, of Louis XV., and of the early days of the reign of Louis XVI., it flourished, and not until the days of the Emperor Napoleon did it lose its prestige. The scandal of this room was one of the great causes which made the whole of the Bourgeoisie and middle classes of France so cordially detest the old monarchy, and induced them to throw the whole weight of their influence into the cause of the Revolution. Such scenes as were enacted there made Lafayette, Beauharnais, De Romœub, and other nobles, use all their influence to destroy a throne built up by crime, and with courtiers and courtesans as its supporters.

² The title given to the eldest daughters of the kings of France.

But the queen's look penetrated to the recesses of Charny's heart.

There was no need for his speaking. Marie Antoinette had divined his thought.

"She is coming," said the queen, "you need not be uneasy."

And she ran to the dauphin, and clasped him in her arms.

Andrée immediately after this closed the last door, and in her turn entered the room called the *Ceil-de Bœuf*.

Andrée and Charny did not exchange a word.

The smile of the one replied to the smile of the other, and that was all.

Strange to say, these two hearts, which had so long been severed, began to entertain feelings which responded to each other.

During this time the queen looked around her, and as if she felt delight in finding Charny in fault.

"The king," she inquired, "where is the king?"

"The king is seeking for you, madame," tranquilly replied Charny: "he went to your apartment by one corridor, while you were coming here by another."

At the same instant loud cries were heard in the adjoining room.

They were the assassins, who were vociferating, "Down with the Austrian woman! Down with the Messalina! Down with the Veto! She must be strangled! She must be hanged!"

At the same time two pistol-shots were heard, and two balls pierced through the door at different heights.

One of these balls passed only a quarter of an inch above the head of the dauphin, and then buried itself in the opposite wainscoting.

"Oh my God! my God!" cried the queen, falling upon her knees.

The five or six guards, upon a sign made to them by

Charny, then placed themselves before the queen and the two royal children, thus forming a rampart for them with their bodies.

At that moment the king appeared, his eyes full of tears, his face pale as death; he was calling for the queen, as the queen had called for him.

He perceived her, and threw himself into her arms.

"Saved! saved!" exclaimed the queen.

"By him, madame," cried the king, pointing to Charny, "and you are saved by him also, are you not?"

"By his brother," replied the queen.

"Monsieur," said Louis XVI. to the count, "we owe so much to your family, so much that we shall never be able to repay the debt."

The queen's eyes met those of Andrée, and she turned away her head blushing deeply.

The blows of the assailants were heard endeavouring to destroy the door.

"Come, gentlemen," said Charny, "we must defend our position here for another hour. There are seven of us, and it will take them full an hour to kill us if we defend ourselves resolutely. Before an hour elapses it will be impossible that a reinforcement should not arrive to the assistance of their Majesties."

Saying these words, Charny seized a large press which was standing in one of the corners of the royal room.

His example was instantly followed, and a heap of furniture was piled up against the door, between which the guards took care to leave loopholes through which they could fire on the assailants.

The queen took her two children in her arms, and raising her hands above their heads, she prayed.

The children restrained their cries and tears.

The king went into the cabinet contiguous to the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, in order to burn some valuable papers which he did not wish to fall into the hands of the assailants.

The latter were attacking the door more desperately than ever. At every instant, splinters were seen flying before the blows given by a sharp hatchet, or wrenched out by large pincers.

By the opening which had been thus made, pikes with reddened points, bayonets reeking with blood, were forced through, attempting to hurl death on those within.

At the same time, the balls pierced the framework above the barricades, and left long traces on the gilded plaster of the ceiling.

At length a bench rolls from the top of the press; the press itself was partly damaged. One whole panel of the door which formed the front of the press gave way, and they could see, in the place of the bayonets and pikes, arms covered with blood pass through it and grasp the sides of the opening, which every moment became wider.

The guards had discharged their last cartridge, and this they had not done uselessly, for through this increasing opening could be seen the floor of the gallery covered with the wounded and dead bodies.

On hearing the shrieks of the women, who believed that through this opening death was advancing upon them, the king returned.

"Sire," said Charny, "shut yourself up with the queen in the farthest room from this; close every door after you; place two of us behind the doors. I demand to be the last, and to guard the last door. I will answer for it that we hold out two hours; they have been more than forty minutes in breaking through this one."

The king hesitated; it appeared to him to be humiliating to fly thus from room to room, to intrench himself thus behind every cupboard.

If the queen had not been there, he would not have retreated a single step.

If the queen had not had her children with her, she would have remained as firmly as the king.

But alas! poor human beings, kings or subjects, we have

always in our hearts some secret opening by which courage escapes and terror enters.

The king was about to give the order to fly to the remotest room, when suddenly the arms were withdrawn, the pikes and bayonets disappeared, the shouts and threats at once ceased.

A general silence ensued, every one remaining with distended lips, eagerly listening ears, and suppressed respiration.

They then heard the measured steps of regular troops advancing.

"They are the National Guards!" cried Charny.

"Monsieur de Charny!" cried a voice; and at the same time the well-known face of Billot appeared at the opening.

"Billot!" cried Charny; "is it you, my friend?"

"Yes, yes, 't is I," replied the honest farmer; "and the king and queen, where are they?"

"They are here."

"Safe and sound?"

"Safe and sound."

"May God be praised! This way, Monsieur Gilbert, this way!" cried he, in his stentorian voice.

At the name of Gilbert, the hearts of two women bounded with very different feelings.

The heart of the queen and the heart of Andrée.

Charny turned round instinctively. He saw both Andrée and the queen turn pale at this name.

He shook his head and sighed.

"Open the door, gentlemen," said the king.

The guards hastened to obey his orders, throwing aside the remains of the barricade.

During this time the voice of Lafayette was heard, crying:—

"Gentlemen of the National Guard of Paris, I last night pledged my word to the king that no injury should be done to any one belonging to his Majesty. If you allow his guards to be massacred, you will make me forfeit my

word of honour, and I shall no longer be worthy to be your chief."

When the door was opened, the two persons first perceived were General Lafayette and Gilbert; a little to their left stood Billot, perfectly delighted at the share he had taken in the king's deliverance.

It was Billot who had gone to awaken Lafayette.

Behind Lafayette, Gilbert, and Billot was Captain Gondran, commanding the company of the centre Saint-Philippe-du-Roule.

Madame Adelaide was the first who rushed forward to greet Lafayette, and, throwing her arms round his neck with all the gratitude of terror, —

"Ah, monsieur!" she exclaimed, "it is you who have saved us."

Lafayette advanced respectfully, and was about crossing the threshold of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, when an officer stopped his progress.

"Your pardon, monsieur," said he to him; "but have you the right of admission?"

"If he have not," said the king, holding out his hand to Lafayette, "I give it to him."

"Long live the king! long live the queen!" cried Billot. The king turned towards him.

"That is a voice I know," said he, smiling.

"You are very kind, sire," replied the worthy farmer. "Yes, yes; you heard that voice on the journey to Paris. Ah! had you but remained in Paris instead of returning here!"

The queen knit her brows.

"Yes," she said, "since you Parisians are so very amiable."

"Well, monsieur," said the king to Monsieur de Lafayette, as if he had been asking him, "in your opinion, what ought now to be done?"

"Sire," respectfully replied Monsieur de Lafayette, "I think it would be well that your Majesty should show yourself on the balcony."

The king asked Gilbert for his opinion, but merely by a look.

Louis XVI. then went straight to the window, and without hesitation opened it himself and appeared upon the balcony.

A tremendous shout, a unanimous shout, burst from the people of —

“Long live the king!”

Then a second cry followed the first: —

“The king to Paris!”

Between these two cries, and sometimes overwhelming them, some formidable voices shouted, —

“The queen! the queen!”

At this cry everybody shuddered; the king turned pale, Charny turned pale, even Gilbert himself turned pale.

The queen raised her head.

She was also pale, but with compressed lips and frowning brow she was standing near the window. Madame Royale was leaning against her. Before her was the dauphin, and on the fair head of the child reclined her convulsively clinched hand, white as the purest marble.

“The queen! the queen!” reiterated the voices, becoming more and more formidable.

“The people desire to see you, madame,” said Lafayette.

“Oh, do not go, my mother!” said Madame Royale, in great agony, and throwing her arms round the queen’s neck.

The queen looked at Lafayette.

“Fear nothing, madame,” said he to her.

“What!” she exclaimed, “and quite alone?”

Lafayette smiled, and respectfully, and with the delightful manner which he retained even to his latest days, he took the two children from their mother and made them first ascend the balcony.

Then, offering his hand to the queen, —

“If your Majesty will deign to confide in me,” said he, “I will be responsible for all.”

And he conducted the queen on to the balcony.

It was a terrible spectacle, and one very likely to cause vertigo. For the marble courtyard was transformed into a human sea, full of roaring waves.

At the sight of the queen, an immense cry was uttered by the whole of this crowd, and no one could have been positive whether it was a cry of menace or of joy.

Lafayette kissed the queen's hand; then loud applause burst forth.

In the noble French nation there is, even in the veins of the lowest born, chivalric blood.

The queen breathed more freely.

"What a strange people!" cried she.

Then, suddenly shuddering, —

"And my guards, monsieur," said she, "my guards, who have saved my life, can you do nothing for them?"

"Let me have one of them, madame," said Lafayette.

"Monsieur de Charny! Monsieur de Charny!" cried the queen.

But Charny withdrew a step or two; he had understood what was required of him.

He did not wish to make an apology for the evening of the 1st of October.

Not having been guilty, he required no amnesty.

Andrée, on her side, was impressed with the same feeling; she had stretched out her hand to Charny for the purpose of preventing him.

Her hand met the hand of the count, and these two hands were pressed within each other.

The queen had observed this, notwithstanding she had so much to observe at that moment.

Her eyes flashed fire, and with a palpitating heart and broken accents, —

"Monsieur," said she to another guard, "monsieur, come here, I command you."

The guard obeyed.

He had not, moreover, the same motives for hesitating that Charny had.

Monsieur de Lafayette drew the guard on to the balcony, and taking his own tricoloured cockade from his hat, placed it in that of the guard, after which he embraced him.

"Long live Lafayette! Long live the body guard!" shouted fifty thousand voices.

Some few wished to utter some hollow growlings, the last threat of the disappearing tempest.

But they were overwhelmed by the universal acclamation.

"Come," said Lafayette, "all is ended, and fine weather has returned."

Then, stepping into the room, —

"But that it should not again be overcast, sire, there still remains a sacrifice for you to make."

"Yes," said the king, pensively, "to leave Versailles, is it not?"

"And come to Paris, — yes, sire."

"Monsieur," said the king, "you may announce to the people that at one o'clock, I, the queen, and my children will set out for Paris."

Then, turning to the queen, —

"Madame," said he, "you had better retire to your own apartment, and prepare yourself."

This order of the king appeared to remind Charny of an event of importance which he had forgotten.

He rushed from the room, preceding the queen.

"Why are you going to my apartment, monsieur?" said the queen harshly to him; "you have no need to go there."

"I earnestly trust it may be so, madame," replied Charny; "but be not uneasy; if really I am not needed there, I shall not remain long enough to cause my presence to be displeasing to your Majesty."

The queen followed him; traces of blood stained the floor, and the queen saw them. She closed her eyes, and, seeking an arm to guide her, she took that of Charny, and walked some steps in this way as a blind person.

Suddenly she felt that every nerve in Charny's body shuddered.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" she said, opening her eyes.

Then suddenly, —

"A dead body! a dead body!" she exclaimed.

"Your Majesty will excuse my withdrawing my arm," said he. "I have found that which I came to seek in your apartment, — the dead body of my brother Georges."

It was in fact the dead body of the unfortunate young man, whom his brother had ordered to allow himself to be killed rather than that the queen should be approached!

He had punctually obeyed.

CHAPTER LVI.

GEORGES DE CHARNY.

THE circumstances we have just related have been recounted in a hundred different ways; for they were certainly the most interesting which occurred in the great period between 1789 and 1795, and which is called the French Revolution.

They will be related in a hundred various ways still; but we can affirm beforehand that no one will relate them with more impartiality than we do.

But of what service will all these narratives be, however true they are? Did ever a political lesson prove instructive to a political man?

The tears, the narratives, and the blood of kings, have they ever had the effect of the single drop of water that hollows the rocks?

No! queens have wept; no! kings have been murdered; and yet their successors have never profited by the cruel lesson which fate had given them.

Faithful subjects have been prodigal of their devotedness, without those whom fatality had destined to misfortune having derived any advantage from it.

Alas! we have seen the queen almost stumble over the body of one of those men whom kings, when they depart, leave bleeding upon the road which they have traversed in their fall.

A few hours after the cry of terror which the queen had uttered, and at the moment when, with the king and her children, she was about to leave Versailles, where she was never to return, the following scene took place in an

interior courtyard, damp from the rain, and which a sharp autumnal wind had begun to dry.

A man dressed in black was leaning over a dead body.

A man dressed in the uniform of the royal guards was kneeling on the opposite side of this body.

At three paces from them a third person was standing, with clasped hands and fixed eyes, gazing intently at them.

The dead body was that of a young man of from twenty-two to twenty-three years of age, the whole of whose blood appeared to have escaped through large wounds in his head and chest.

His chest was scarred with frightful gashes, the skin surrounding them was of a livid white; it appeared still to heave with the disdainful breathings of a hopeless defence.

His half-opened mouth, his head thrown back with an expression of pain and anger, recalled to the mind the beautiful statue of the dying gladiator.

"And life with a long groan fled to the abode of shadows."

The man dressed in black was Gilbert.

The officer on his knees was the Count de Charny.

The man standing near them was Billot.

The corpse was that of the Baron Georges de Charny.

Gilbert, leaning over the body, gazed at it with that sublime intentness which, with the dying, retains life when about to escape, and with the dead almost recalls the soul which has taken flight.

"Cold, stiff; he is dead, positively dead," said he at length.

The Count de Charny uttered a hoarse groan, and pressing in his arms the insensible body, burst into sobs, so heartrending that the doctor shuddered, and Billot ran to hide his head in a corner of the small courtyard.

Then suddenly the count raised the body, placed it against the wall, and slowly withdrew, still looking at it as if he expected that his dead brother would become re-animated and follow him.

Gilbert remained still kneeling on one knee, his head reclining on his hand, pensive and motionless.

Billot then left his dark corner and went up to Gilbert; he no longer heard the count's sobs, which had torn his heart.

"Alas! alas! Monsieur Gilbert," said he, "this, then, is really what we have to expect in civil war, and that which you predicted to me is now happening; only it is happening sooner than I expected, and even sooner than you yourself expected. I saw these *villains* murdering unworthy people; and now I see these *villains* murdering honest people. I saw them massacre Flesselles; I saw them massacre Monsieur de Launay; I saw Foulon massacred; I saw Berthier massacred. I then shuddered in every limb, and I felt a horror for all men.

"And yet the men they were then killing were miserable wretches.

"It was then, Monsieur Gilbert, that you predicted the time would come when they would kill honest people.

"They have killed the Baron de Charny. I no longer shudder, I weep; I have no longer a horror of others, I fear I may resemble them."

"Billot!" cried Gilbert.

But, without listening, Billot continued:—

"Here is a young man whom they have assassinated, Monsieur Gilbert; he was a mere boy; he was fairly combating, he was not assassinating, but he has been assassinated."

Billot heaved a sigh, which seemed to issue from the bottom of his heart.

"Ah! the unhappy youth!" he cried. "I knew him when he was a child. I have seen him pass by when he was going from Boursonne to Villers-Cotterêts on his little gray pony; he was carrying bread to the poor from his mother.

"He was a beautiful boy, with a fair, rosy complexion, and large blue eyes; he was always smiling. Well! it is

very extraordinary, since I saw him stretched out there, bloody and disfigured, it is not a corpse that I behold in him, but always the smiling child of former days, carrying a basket on his left arm and his purse in his right hand.

"Ah! Monsieur Gilbert, in truth I believe I have now had enough of it, and do not desire to see anything more; for you predicted this to me. The time will come when I shall also see you die, and then —"

Gilbert gently shook his head.

"Billot," said he, "be calm; my hour has not yet come."

"Be it so; but mine has come, doctor. I have a harvest down yonder which has rotted, fields that are lying fallow, a family whom I love ten times more dearly on seeing this dead body, whose family are weeping for him."

"What do you mean to say, my dear Billot? Do you believe, perchance, that I am going to afflict myself about you?"

"Oh, no!" replied Billot, ingenuously; "but as I suffer, I complain; and as complaining leads to nothing, I calculate on alleviating my own sufferings in my own way."

"Which means to say that —"

"It means that I desire to return to my farm, Monsieur Gilbert."

"Again, Billot?"

"Ah! Monsieur Gilbert, there is a voice down yonder which is calling for me."

"Take care, Billot, that voice is advising you to desert."

"I am not a soldier, and therefore there is no desertion, Monsieur Gilbert."

"What you are wishing to do would be a desertion far more culpable than that of a soldier."

"Explain that to me, doctor."

"How! you have come to Paris to demolish, and you would fly as soon as the building is falling."

"Yes, that I may not crush my friends."

"Or rather that you may not be crushed yourself."

"Why, why!" replied Billot, "it is not forbidden that a man should think a little of himself."

"Ah! that is a magnificent calculation, indeed! As if stones did not roll, as if in rolling they did not crush, and even at a distance, the timid men who would fly from them."

"Oh! you are well aware that I am not a timid man, Monsieur Gilbert."

"Then you will remain, Billot; I have occasion for you here."

"My family also stands in need of me down yonder."

"Billot! Billot! I thought that you had agreed with me that a man who loves his country has no family."

"I should like to know whether you would use the same language if Sébastien lay there, as that young man lies."

And he pointed to the dead body.

"Billot," replied Gilbert, in a hollow tone, "the day will arrive when my son shall see me as I now see that body."

"So much the worse for him, doctor, if on that day he should be as calm as you are now."

"I hope that he will be a better man than I am, Billot, and that he will be firmer still, and precisely because I shall have given him an example of firmness."

"Then you would have the child accustom himself to see blood flowing around him, that he should in his youthful years become habituated to great conflagrations, to gibbets and riots, attacks in the dark; that he should see kings threatened, queens insulted, and then, when he has become as hard as his sword-blade, and quite as cold, you would still expect that he should love, that he should respect you."

"No, I would not have him see all that, Billot; and that is the reason for my sending him back to Villers-Cotterêts, and which I now almost regret."

"How! You now regret it?"

"Yes."

"And why do you now regret?"

"Because he would this day have seen exemplified the axiom of the lion and the rat, which to him is but a fable."

"What do you mean to say, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"I say that he would have seen a poor farmer whom chance has brought to Paris, a brave and honest man who can neither read nor write, who never could have believed that his life could have influenced either for good or evil the high destinies which he scarcely dared to raise his eyes to,—I say that he would have seen that man, who had already at one time wished to leave Paris, as he again wishes it,—I say that he would have seen this man contribute efficaciously to save the life of a king, a queen, and two royal children."

Billot stared at Gilbert with astonished eyes.

"And how so, Monsieur Gilbert?" says he.

"How so? you sublimely ignorant fellow! I will tell you how. By waking at the first noise that was made; by guessing that this noise was a tempest ready to burst upon Versailles; by running to wake up Monsieur Lafayette — for Monsieur Lafayette was asleep."

"Zounds! that was perfectly natural, for he had been twelve hours on horseback, and for twenty-four hours he had not been in bed."

"By leading him to the palace," continued Gilbert, "and by bringing him at once into the midst of the assassins, and crying, 'Stop, wretches, here is the avenger!'"

"Well, now, that is really true, — I did all that."

"Well, then, Billot, you see that this is a great compensation. If you did not prevent this young man being assassinated, you have perhaps prevented the assassination of the king, the queen, and the two children. Ungrateful man! and you ask to leave the service of the country at the very moment when the country recompenses you."

"But who will ever know what I have done, since I myself even had no idea of it?"

"You and I, Billot, — and is not that enough?"

Billot reflected for a moment, then, holding out his rough hand to the doctor, —

"I declare you are right, Monsieur Gilbert," said he; "but you know that a man is but a weak, egotistical, inconstant creature. There is only you, Monsieur Gilbert, who is firm, generous, and constant. What is it that has made you so?"

"Misfortune," said Gilbert, with a smile, in which there was more sorrow than in a sob.

"That is singular," said Billot; "I had thought that misfortune made men wicked."

"The weak, yes."

"And I should be unfortunate and become wicked."

"You may perhaps be unfortunate; but you will never become wicked, Billot."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I will answer for you."

"In that case —" said Billot, sighing.

"In that case?" repeated Gilbert.

"Why, I will remain with you; but more than once I know I shall again be vacillating."

"And every time it happens, Billot, I shall be near you to sustain your firmness."

"Well, again I say, so be it," sighed the farmer.

Then, casting a last look on the body of the Baron Georges de Charny, which the servants were about to remove on a bier, —

"It matters not," said Billot; "he was a handsome boy, that little Georges de Charny, on his little gray pony, with a basket on his left arm and his purse in his right hand."

CHAPTER LVII.

DEPARTURE, JOURNEY, AND ARRIVAL OF PITOU AND
SÉBASTIEN GILBERT.

WE have seen, under circumstances long anterior to those we have now related, the departure of Pitou and Sébastien Gilbert.

Our intention being, for the present, to abandon the principal personages of our history, to follow the two young travellers, we hope that our readers will allow us to enter into some details relating to their arrival at Villers-Cotterêts.

Gilbert had commissioned Pitou to go to the College Louis-le-Grand, and to bring Sébastien to him. For this purpose they put Pitou into a hackney-coach, and as they had confided Sébastien to Pitou, they confided Pitou to the care of the coachman.

In about an hour the coach brought back Pitou; Pitou brought back Sébastien.

Gilbert and Billot were waiting for them in an apartment which they had taken in the Rue Saint-Honoré, a little above the Church of the Assumption.

Gilbert explained to his son that he was to set out the same evening with Pitou, and asked him whether he would not be well pleased to return to the great woods he so much loved.

"Yes, father," replied the boy, "provided that you will come to see me at Villers-Cotterêts, or that you allow me to come to see you at Paris."

"You may be easy on that score, my child," replied Gilbert, kissing his son's forehead; "you know that now I shall never be happy when away from you."

As to Pitou, he coloured with delight at the idea of setting out the same evening.

He turned pale with happiness when Gilbert placed both Sébastien's hands within one of his, and in the other ten double louis of the value of forty-eight francs each.

A long series of instructions, almost all regarding the health of his companion, were given by the doctor to Pitou, to which he religiously listened.

Sébastien cast down his large eyes to conceal his tears.

Pitou was weighing and jingling his louis in his immense pocket.

Gilbert gave a letter to Pitou, who was thus installed in his functions of tutor.

This letter was for the Abbé Fortier.

The doctor's harangue being terminated, Billot spoke in his turn.

"Monsieur Gilbert," said he, "has confided to you the health of Sébastien; I will confide to you his personal safety. You have a pair of stout fists in case of need; make good use of them."

"Yes," said Pitou; "and, besides them, I have a sabre."

"Do not make an abuse of that."

"I will be merciful," said Pitou; "*clemens ero.*"

"A hero, if you will," repeated Billot, but not intending to say it jeeringly.

"And now," said Gilbert, "I will point out to you the way in which Sébastien should travel."

"Oh!" cried Pitou, "it is only eighteen leagues from Paris to Villers-Cotterêts; we will talk all the way, Sébastien and I."

Sébastien looked at his father, as if to ask him whether it would be very amusing to talk during the journey of eighteen leagues with Pitou.

Pitou caught this glance.

"We will speak Latin," said he, "and we shall be taken for learned men."

This was the dream of his ambition, the innocent creature.

How many others, with ten double louis in their pocket, would have said, —

"We will buy gingerbread."

Gilbert appeared for a moment to be in doubt.

He looked at Pitou, then at Billot.

"I understand you," said the latter; "you are asking yourself whether Pitou is a proper guide, and you hesitate to confide your child to him."

"Oh!" said Gilbert, "it is not to him that I confide him."

"To whom, then?"

Gilbert looked up to heaven; he was still too much a Voltairian to dare to reply, —

"To God!"

And the affair was settled. They resolved in consequence not to make any change in Pitou's plan, which promised, without exposing him to too much fatigue, a journey replete with amusement to Sébastien; but it was decided they should not commence it until the following morning.

Gilbert might have sent his son to Villers-Cotterêts by one of the public conveyances which at that period were running between Paris and the frontiers, or even in his own carriage; but we know how much he feared the isolation of thought for young Sébastien, and nothing so much isolates dreaming people as the motion and rumbling noise of a carriage.

He therefore took the two young travellers as far as Bourget, and then, showing them the open road, on which a brilliant sun was shining and which was bordered by a double row of trees, he embraced his son again, and, opening his arms, said, —

“Now go!”

Pitou therefore set off, leading Sébastien, who several times turned round to blow kisses to his father, who was standing, his arms crossed, upon the spot where he had taken leave of his son, following him with his eyes as if he were following a dream.

Pitou raised himself to the full height of his extraordinary stature. Pitou was very proud of the confidence reposed in him by a person of Monsieur Gilbert's importance, one of the king's physicians in ordinary.

Pitou prepared himself scrupulously to fulfil the task intrusted to him, which combined the functions of a tutor and almost those of a governess.

Moreover, it was with full confidence in himself that he was conducting little Sébastien; he travelled very quietly, passing through villages which were in all commotion and terror since the events at Paris, which had only just occurred; for although we have brought up these events to the 5th and 6th of October, it must be remembered that it was towards the end of July or the beginning of August that Pitou and Sébastien left Paris.

Besides this, Pitou had retained his helmet for a head-dress, and his long sabre as a defensive weapon.

These were all that he had gained by the events of the 13th and 14th of July; but this twofold trophy satisfied his ambition, and, by giving him a formidable air, at the same time sufficed for his safety.

Moreover, this formidable air, to which indubitably the helmet and dragoon's sabre greatly contributed, Pitou had acquired independently of them. A man has not assisted in taking the Bastille, he has not even merely been present at it, without having retained something heroic in his deportment.

Pitou had, in addition to this, become somewhat of an advocate.

No one could have listened to the resolutions passed at the Hôtel de Ville, to the orations of Monsieur Bailly, the

harangues of Monsieur de Lafayette, without becoming somewhat of an orator; above all, if he had already studied the Latin *Conciones*, of which French eloquence at the close of the eighteenth century was rather a pale, though a tolerably correct imitation.

Furnished with these two powerful modes of argument, to which two vigorous fists were no mean adjuncts, and possessing a rare amenity of smile and a most interesting appetite, Pitou journeyed on agreeably towards Villers-Cotterêts.

For the curious in politics he had news, besides which he could manufacture them in case of need, having resided in Paris, where from that period their fabrication has been always remarkable.

He related how Monsieur Berthier had left immense buried treasures, which the government would some day manage to dig up; how Monsieur de Lafayette, the paragon of all glory, the pride of provincial France, was no longer considered in Paris but as a half-used-up doll, whose white horse was a fertile subject for the concoction of jests and caricatures; how Monsieur Bailly, whom Monsieur de Lafayette honoured with his most intimate friendship, as well as all the members of his family, was an aristocrat, and that scandalous people said even worse things of him.

When he related all this, Pitou raised tempests of anger against him, but he possessed the *quos ego* of all these storms. He would then relate unpublished anecdotes of the *Austrian woman*.

His inexhaustible fancy procured for him an uninterrupted succession of excellent repasts, until he arrived at Vauciennes, the last village on the road before reaching Villers-Cotterêts.

As Sébastien, on the contrary, ate little or nothing, as he did not speak at all, as he was a pale and sickly-looking youth, every one who felt interested in Sébastien admired the vigilant and paternal care of Pitou towards him,

who caressed, cosseted, attended on the boy, and into the bargain, ate his part of the dinners, without seeming to have any other motive than that of being agreeable to him.

When they arrived at Vauciennes, Pitou appeared to hesitate; he looked at Sébastien, Sébastien looked at Pitou.

Pitou scratched his head. This was his mode of expressing his embarrassment.

Sébastien knew enough of Pitou to be aware of this peculiarity.

"Well, what is the matter, Pitou?" asked Sébastien.

"The matter is, that if it were the same thing to you, and if you were not too tired, instead of continuing our way straight on, we would return to Villers-Cotterêts through Haramont."

And Pitou, honest lad, blushed while expressing this wish, as Catherine would have blushed when expressing a less innocent desire.

Sébastien at once understood him.

"Ah! yes," said he, "it was there our poor mother Pitou died."

"Come, my brother, come."

Pitou pressed Sébastien to his heart with an energy that almost suffocated him, and, taking the boy's hand, he began running down the cross-road which leads along the valley of Wuala, and so rapidly that, after going a hundred paces, poor Sébastien was completely out of breath, and was obliged to say, —

"Too fast, Pitou, too fast."

Pitou stopped; he had not perceived that he was going too fast, it being his usual pace.

He saw that Sébastien was pale and out of breath.

He took him on his shoulders and carried him.

In this way Pitou might walk as fast as he pleased.

As it was not the first time that Pitou had carried Sébastien, Sébastien made no objection.

They thus reached Largny. There Sébastien, feeling that Pitou was panting, declared that he had rested long enough,

and that he was ready to walk at any pace that might suit Pitou.

Pitou, being full of magnanimity, moderated his pace.

Half an hour after this, Pitou was at the entrance of Haramont, the pretty village where he first saw the light, as says the romance of a great poet, — a romance the music of which is of more value than the words.

When they reached it, the two boys cast a look around them to discover their old haunts.

The first thing which they perceived was the crucifix which popular piety habitually places at the entrance to all villages.

Alas! even at Haramont they felt the strange progression which Paris was making towards atheism. The nails which fastened the right arm and the feet of the figure of Christ had broken off from rust having eaten through them. The figure was hanging suspended only by the left arm, and no one had had the pious idea of replacing the symbol of that liberty, that equality, that fraternity, which every one was in those days preaching.

Pitou was not devout, but he had the traditions of his childhood. That this holy symbol should have been thus neglected, wounded him to the heart. He searched the hedges for one of those creeping plants which are as thin and as tenacious as iron wire, laid his helmet and his sabre on the grass, climbed up the cross, refastened the arm of the Divine Martyr to it, kissed the feet, and descended.

During this time Sébastien was praying on his knees at the foot of the cross. For whom was he praying? Who can tell?

Perhaps for that vision of his childhood which he fondly hoped once more to find beneath the great trees; for that unknown mother who is never unknown; for if she has not nourished us from her breast, yet is she still our mother.

His holy action being accomplished, Pitou replaced his helmet on his head, and replaced his sabre in his belt.

When Sébastien had concluded his prayer, he made the sign of the cross, and again took Pitou's hand.

Both of them then entered the village, and advanced towards the cottage in which Pitou had been born, in which Sébastien had been nursed.

Pitou knew every stone in Haramont, and yet he could not find the cottage. He was obliged to inquire what had become of it, and the person he applied to showed him a small house built of stone, with a slated roof.

The garden of this house was surrounded by a wall.

Aunt Angelique had sold her sister's house, and the new proprietor, having full right to do so, had pulled down everything: the old walls, which had again become dust; the old door with a hole cut in to allow ingress to the cat; the old windows, with their panes half glass, half paper, upon which had appeared in strokes the elementary lessons Pitou had received in writing; the thatched roof with its green moss, and the plants which had grown and blossomed on its summit. The new proprietor had pulled down all this; all had disappeared.

The gate was closed, and lying on the threshold was a big black dog, who showed his teeth to Pitou.

"Come," said Pitou, the tears starting from his eyes; "let us be gone, Sébastien. Let us go to a place where at least I am sure that nothing will have changed."

And Pitou dragged Sébastien to the cemetery where his mother had been buried.

He was right, the poor boy! There, nothing had been changed; only the grass had grown; it grows so rapidly in cemeteries that there was some chance even that he would not be able to recognise his mother's grave. Fortunately, at the same time that the grass had grown, a branch of a weeping-willow which Pitou had planted had in three years become a tree. He went straight to the tree and kissed the earth which it overshadowed, with the same instinctive piety with which he had kissed the feet of the figure of Christ.

When he rose from the ground, he felt the branches of the willow, agitated by the wind, waving around his head.

He then stretched out his arms, and, clasping the branches, pressed them to his heart.

It was as if he was holding the hair of his mother, which he was embracing for the last time.

The two youths remained a considerable time by the side of this grave, and evening was approaching.

It was necessary that they should leave it, — the only thing that appeared to have any remembrance of Pitou.

When about to leave it, Pitou for a moment had the idea of breaking off a slip of the willow, and placing it in his helmet; but just when he was raising his hand to do so, he paused.

It appeared to him that it would be giving pain to his poor mother to tear off a branch from a tree, the roots of which perhaps were entwined round the decaying deal coffin in which her remains reposed.

He again kissed the ground, took Sébastien by the hand, and left the cemetery.

All the inhabitants of the village were either in the fields or in the woods; few persons therefore had seen Pitou, and, disguised as he was by his helmet and his long sabre, among those persons no one had recognised him.

He therefore took the road to Villers-Cotterêts, a delightful road which runs through the forest for nearly three quarters of a league, without meeting any living or animated object to divert his grief.

Sébastien followed, mute and pensive as himself.

They arrived at Villers-Cotterêts at about five in the afternoon.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HOW PITOU, AFTER HAVING BEEN CURSED AND TURNED OUT OF DOORS BY HIS AUNT ON ACCOUNT OF A BARBARISM AND THREE SOLECISMS, WAS AGAIN CURSED AND TURNED OUT BY HER ON ACCOUNT OF A FOWL COOKED WITH RICE.

PITOU arrived at Villers-Cotterêts by that part of the park which is called the Pheasantry. He walked across the dancing place, always abandoned during the week, and to which he had three weeks previously conducted Catherine.

What a number of things had happened to Pitou and to France during those three weeks!

Then, having followed the long avenue of chestnut trees, he reached the square before the chateau, and knocked at the back door of the college presided over by the Abbé Fortier.

It was full three years since Pitou had left Haramont, while it was only three weeks since he had left Villers-Cotterêts. It was therefore very natural that he should not have been recognised at Haramont, and that he should have been recognised at Villers-Cotterêts.

In a moment a rumour ran through the town that Pitou had returned there with young Sébastien Gilbert; that both of them had gone into the house of the Abbé Fortier; that Sébastien looked much the same as when he had left them, but that Pitou had a helmet and a long sword.

The result of this was that a great crowd had assembled at the principal gate; for they calculated that, if Pitou had gone into the chateau by the small private door, he would come out of it by the great gate in the Rue de Soissons.

This was his direct road for going to the Pleux.

In fact, Pitou remained at the Abbé Fortier's only long enough to deliver into the hands of the abbé's sister the letter from the doctor, the young lad himself, and five double louis destined to pay his board.

The Abbé Fortier's sister was at first much terrified when she saw so formidable a soldier advancing through the garden; but soon, beneath the dragoon's helmet, she recognised the placid and honest face of Pitou, which somewhat tranquillised her.

And finally the sight of the five double louis reassured her altogether.

This terror of the poor old maid can be the more readily explained by informing our readers that the Abbé Fortier had gone out with his pupils to give them a walk, and that she was quite alone in the house.

Pitou, after having delivered the letter and the five double louis, embraced Sébastien, and left the house, clapping his helmet on his head with due military bravado.

Sébastien had shed some tears on separating from Pitou, although the separation was not to be of long duration, and notwithstanding that his society was not exceedingly amusing; but his hilarity, his mildness, his continued complaisance, had touched the heart of young Gilbert. Pitou had the disposition of those fine great Newfoundland dogs, who sometimes fatigue you very much, but who in the end disarm your anger by licking your hand.

There was one thing which diminished Sébastien's grief, which was that Pitou promised that he would often go to see him. One thing diminished Pitou's regret, and this was that Sébastien thanked him for his promise.

But now let us for a while follow our hero from the house of the Abbé Fortier to that of his Aunt Angelique, situated, as our readers already know, at the farther end of the Pleux.

On leaving the Abbé Fortier's house, Pitou found some twenty persons who were waiting for him. His strange

equipment, a description of which had been given throughout the town, was in part known to those assembled. On seeing him thus return from Paris, where so much fighting was going on, they presumed that Pitou had been fighting too, and they wished to hear the news.

This news Pitou communicated with his accustomed majesty. The taking of the Bastile, the exploits of Monsieur Billot and of Monsieur Maillard, of Messieurs Elie and Hullin; how Billot had fallen into the ditch of the fortress, and how he, Pitou, had dragged him out of it; finally, how they had saved Monsieur Gilbert, who, during six or seven days, had been one of the prisoners confined there.

The auditors already knew most of the details that Pitou had related to them; but they had read all these details in the newspapers of the day, and, however faithful the editor of a newspaper may be in his writings, he always knows less than an ocular witness who relates the incidents, — who may be interrupted, and who resumes, — who may be questioned, and replies.

Now Pitou resumed, replied, gave all the details, showing when interrupted the greatest complaisance, in all his answers the greatest possible amenity.

The result of all this was that, in about an hour's conversation at the door of the Abbé Fortier, in which he gave a succinct narrative, the Rue de Soissons was crowded with auditors, when one of the persons present, observing some signs of anxiety in Pitou's countenance, took upon himself to say: —

"But he is fatigued, poor Pitou, and we are keeping him here upon his legs, instead of allowing him to go to his Aunt Angelique's house, poor, dear woman, who will be so delighted at seeing him again."

"It is not that I am fatigued," said Pitou, "but that I am hungry. I have never been fatigued, but I am always hungry."

Then, and in consequence of this ingenuous declaration,

the crowd, who highly respected the cravings of Pitou's stomach, respectfully made way for him to pass, and Pitou, followed by some persons more inveterately curious than the rest, was permitted to wend his way to the Pleux, that is to say, to the house of his Aunt Angelique.

Aunt Angelique was not at home; she had gone doubtless to visit some neighbours, and the door was locked.

Several persons then invited Pitou to go to their houses and take the nourishment he stood in need of; but Pitou proudly refused.

"But," said they to him, "you see, dear Pitou, that your aunt's door is locked."

"The door of an aunt cannot remain locked before an obedient and hungry nephew," said Pitou majestically.

And, drawing his long sabre, the sight of which made men and children start back with affright, he introduced the point of it between the bolt and the staple of the lock, gave a vigorous jerk, and the door flew open, to the great admiration of all present, who no longer doubted the great exploits of Pitou, since they saw him with so much audacity expose himself to the anger of the ill-tempered old maid.

The interior of the house was in precisely the same state as when Pitou had left it. The famous leathern arm-chair royally held its state in the centre of the room; two or three other mutilated chairs and stools formed the lame court of the great arm-chair; at the end of the room was the kneading-trough; on the right, the cupboard and the chimney.

Pitou entered the house with a bland smile; he had no quarrel with all these poor articles of furniture; on the contrary, they were the friends of his youth. They were, it is true, almost as hard in their nature as Aunt Angelique; but when they were opened there was something good to be found in them; while, had Aunt Angelique been opened, her inside would certainly have been found drier and worse than her exterior.

Pitou upon the instant gave a proof of what we have

advanced to the persons who had followed him, and who, seeing what was going on, were waiting outside the house, curious to see what would be the result when Aunt Angelique should return home.

It was, moreover, very perceptible that all these persons felt great sympathy for Pitou. We have said that Pitou was hungry, — so hungry that it had been perceived by the change in his countenance.

Therefore he lost no time; he went straight to the kneading-trough and cupboard.

In former times — we say former times, although scarcely three weeks had elapsed since Pitou's departure, for in our opinion time is to be measured, not by its duration, but by the events which have occurred — in former times, Pitou, unless urged on by the evil spirit, or by irresistible hunger, both of them infernal powers, and which much resemble each other — in former times Pitou would have seated himself upon the threshold of the closed door, and humbly waited the return of Aunt Angelique; when she had returned, would have bowed to her with a soft smile; then, standing aside, would have made room for her to pass, would have followed her into the house, would have gone for a loaf and a knife that she might measure out his portion to him; then, his share being cut off, he would have cast a longing eye, a single look, tearful and magnetic — he thought it so at least — magnetic to such a degree as to call forth the cheese or any other dainty from the shelf of the cupboard.

An electricity which rarely succeeded, but which however sometimes did succeed.

But now Pitou, having become a man, no longer acted thus: he tranquilly raised the lid of the bread-trough, drew from his pocket his long clasp-knife, took the loaf and angularly cut off a slice which might have weighed a good kilogramme (two pounds), as is elegantly said since the adoption of the new-system weights.

Then he let fall the loaf into the trough again, and the cover on the loaf.

After which, without allowing his equanimity to be at all disturbed, he went to the cupboard.

It appeared to Pitou for an instant that he heard the growling voice of Aunt Angelique; but the cupboard door creaked upon its hinges, and this noise, which had all the power of reality, drowned the other, which had only the influence of imagination.

At the time when Pitou was one of the household, the avaricious aunt would provide only viands of a coarse description, such as Marolles cheese, or thin slices of highly salted bacon, surrounded by the verdant leaves of an enormous cabbage; but since this fabulous devourer had left the country, the aunt, in despite of her avarice, would cook up for herself dishes that would last her a whole week, but which were of a much more succulent description.

Sometimes it would be a good piece of beef *à la mode*, surrounded by carrots and onions, stewed in the gravy; sometimes a haricot of mutton with savoury potatoes, big as a child's head, or long as cucumbers; sometimes a calf's foot, flavoured with some shalots in vinegar, to give it more piquancy; sometimes it was a gigantic omelet made in the great frying-pan, and variegated with a quantity of chives and parsley, or enamelled with slices of bacon, one of which sufficed for the dinner of the old woman, even on the days when she had the greatest appetite.

During the whole week, Aunt Angelique would, with great discretion, enjoy the savoury dish making only such breaches in the precious morsel as the exigencies of the moment required.

Each day did she rejoice in being alone to consume such good things, and during the thrice happy week she thought of her nephew, Ange Pitou, as often as she placed her hand upon the dish or raised a mouthful to her lips.

Pitou was in great good luck.

He had fallen upon a day — it was Monday — when Aunt Angelique had cooked an old cock with rice, which had

boiled so long, surrounded with its bland covering of paste, that the bones had left the flesh, and the flesh had become almost tender.

It was a formidable dish; it was served up in a deep wide porringer, which, though black externally, was resplendent and attractive to the eye.

The meat was placed above the rice, looking like small islands on the bosom of a vast lake, and the cock's comb, rising above them all, looked like the crest of Ceuta in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Pitou had not even the courtesy to utter one word of admiration on seeing this great marvel.

Spoiled by good living, he forgot, the ungrateful fellow! that such magnificence had never until then inhabited the cupboard of Aunt Angelique.

He held his great hunch of bread in his right hand.

He seized the vast dish in his left, and held it in equilibrium by the pressure of his immense square thumb, buried as far as the first joint in the unctuous mess, the odour of which was grateful to his olfactory organs.

At this moment it appeared to Pitou that a shadow interposed between the light of the doorway and himself.

He turned round smiling, for Pitou's was one of those artless dispositions whose faces always give evidence of the satisfaction of their hearts.

The shadow was the body of Aunt Angelique.

Of Aunt Angelique, more miserly, more crabbed, and more skin and bone than ever.

In former days, — we are obliged incessantly to return to the same figure of speech, — that is to say, to the comparative, as comparison alone can express our thought; — in former times, at the sight of Aunt Angelique, Pitou would have let fall the dish, and while Aunt Angelique would have bent forward in despair to pick up the fragments of her fowl and the grains of rice, he would have bounded over her head, and would have taken to his heels, carrying off his bread under his arm.

But Pitou was no longer the same; his helmet and his sabre had less changed him, physically speaking, than his having associated with the great philosophers of the day had changed him morally.

Instead of flying terrified from his aunt, he approached her with a gracious smile, opened wide his arms, and, although she endeavoured to escape the pressure, embraced her with all his might, squeezing the old maid so energetically to his breast, while his hands, the one loaded with the dish containing the fowl and rice, and the other with the bread and knife, were crossed behind her back.

When he had accomplished this most nephew-like act, which he considered as a duty imposed upon him, and which it was necessary to fulfil, he breathed with all the power of his vast lungs, and said, —

“Aunt Angelique, you may well be surprised, but it is indeed your poor Pitou.”

When he had clasped her so fervently in his arms, the old maid imagined that, having been surprised in the very act by her, Pitou had wished to suffocate her, as Hercules in former days had strangled Antæus.

She, on her side, breathed more freely when she found herself relieved from this dangerous embrace.

Only Aunt Angelique might have remarked that Pitou had not even manifested his admiration of the dish he was devouring.

Pitou was not only ungrateful, but he was also ill-bred.

But there was one thing which disgusted Aunt Angelique more than the rest; and this was, that, while she would be seated in state in her leathern arm-chair, Pitou would not even dare to sit down on one of the dilapidated chairs or one of the lame stools which surrounded it; but, instead of this, after having so cordially embraced her, Pitou had very coolly ensconced himself in her own arm-chair, had placed the dish between his knees, and was leisurely devouring its contents.

In his powerful right hand he held the knife already

mentioned, the blade of which was wide and long, a perfect spatula, with which Polyphemus himself might have eaten his pottage.

In the other hand he held a bit of bread of three fingers wide and six inches long, — a perfect broom, with which he swept up the rice, while on its side the knife, in seeming gratitude, pushed the meat upon the bread.

A learned though pitiless manœuvre, the result of which in a few minutes was that it caused the blue and white of the interior of the dish to become visible, as during the ebbing tide we gradually perceive the rings and marks upon the quays of a seaport.

We must renounce attempting to describe the frightful perplexity and despair of Aunt Angelique.

At one moment she imagined that she could call out.

Pitou, however, smiled at her with such a fascinating air, that the words expired before Aunt Angelique could give them utterance.

Then she attempted to smile in her turn, hoping to exorcise that ferocious animal called hunger, and which had taken up its abode in the stomach of her nephew.

But the proverb is right; the famished stomach of Pitou remained both deaf and dumb.

His aunt, instead of smiling, wept.

This somewhat incommoded Pitou, but it did not prevent his eating.

“Oh! oh! aunt, how good you are,” said he, “to cry thus with joy on my arrival! Thanks, my good aunt, thanks!”

And he went on devouring.

Evidently the French Revolution had completely denaturalised this man.

He bolted three fourths of the fowl, and left a small quantity of the rice at the bottom of the dish, saying, —

“You like the rice best, do you not, my dear aunt? It is softer for your teeth. I leave you the rice.”

This attention, which she no doubt imagined to be a

sarcasm, almost suffocated Aunt Angelique. She resolutely advanced towards young Pitou, snatched the dish from his hands, uttering a blasphemous expression, which, twenty years subsequently, would have appeared admirably suitable to a grenadier of the old guard.

Pitou heaved a sigh.

"Oh aunt!" cried he, "you regret your fowl, do you not?"

"The villain!" cried Aunt Angelique; "I believe that he is jeering me."

Pitou rose from his chair.

"Aunt," said he, majestically, "it was not my intention to eat without paying for what I ate. I have money. I will, if you please, board regularly with you, only I shall reserve to myself the right of choosing my own dinner."

"Rascal!" exclaimed Aunt Angelique.

"Let us see, — we will calculate each portion at four sous. I now owe you for one meal, — four sous' worth of rice and two sous' of bread, — six sous."

"Six sous!" cried the aunt; "six sous! why, there is eight sous' worth of rice and six sous' of bread, without counting anything else."

"Oh, I know I have not allowed anything for the fowl, my good aunt, knowing that it came from your poultry yard. He was an old acquaintance, — I knew him at once by his comb."

"He was worth his price, however."

"He was five years old, at least. I stole him from under his mother's wing for you; he was then barely as big as my fist; and I recollect even that you beat me, because when I brought him home to you I did not bring you corn enough to feed him the next day. Mademoiselle Catherine gave me some barley. He was my property, and I ate my property; I had good right to do so."

His aunt, mad with anger, pulverised the revolutionary hero with a look; she had no voice.

"Get out of this!" she muttered.

"What, at once, so soon after having dined, without even giving me time to digest my dinner? Ah! aunt, aunt, that is by no means polite."

"Out with you!"

Pitou, who had again sat down, rose from the arm-chair. He found, and that with a most lively feeling of satisfaction, that his stomach could not have contained a single grain of rice more than he had swallowed.

"Aunt," said he, majestically, "you are an unfeeling relation. I will demonstrate to you that you are now acting as wrongly towards me as you have always done; that you are still as harsh, still as avaricious as ever. Well, I will not allow you to go about telling every one that I have devoured your property."

He placed himself on the threshold of the door, and in a stentorian voice, which might be heard not only by the inquisitive persons who had accompanied him, and had been present during the whole of this scene, but also by every one who was passing at a distance of five hundred paces:—

"I call these worthy people to witness, that having arrived from Paris, on foot, after having taken the Bastile, being tired and hungry, I seated myself in this house; that I ate my relation's provisions; that I was so harshly reproached for the food of which I partook, that I was so pitilessly driven from the house, that I feel myself compelled to go."

Pitou delivered this exordium in so pathetic a tone that the neighbours began to murmur against the old woman.

"A poor traveller," continued Pitou, "who has walked nine leagues,—a worthy lad, honoured with the confidence of Monsieur Gilbert and Monsieur Billot, and who was charged by them to bring back Sébastien Gilbert to the Abbé Fortier,—one of the conquerors of the Bastile,—a friend of Monsieur Bailly and of General Lafayette,—I call upon you all to witness that I have been turned out."

The murmurs went on increasing.

"And," pursued he, "as I am not a mendicant, as, when I am reproached for the bread I eat I pay for it, here is half a crown which I lay down as payment for that which I have eaten in my aunt's house."

And, saying this, Pitou proudly drew a half-crown from his pocket, and threw it on the table, from which, in the sight of all, it rebounded, hopped into the dish, and half buried itself in the remaining rice.

This last act completely confounded the old woman. She bent down beneath the universal reprobation to which she had exposed herself, and which was testified by a long, loud murmur. Twenty hands were held out to Pitou, who left the hut shaking the dust from his shoes on the threshold, and disappeared from his aunt's eyes, escorted by a crowd of persons offering him his meals and lodging, happy to be the hosts of a conqueror of the Bastile, a friend of Monsieur Bailly and of General Lafayette.

Aunt Angelique picked the half-crown out of the rice, wiped it, and put it into the saucer, where it was to wait, with many others, its transmigration into an old louis.

But while putting by this half-crown of which she had become possessed in so singular a manner, she sighed, reflecting that perhaps Pitou had had full right to eat the whole of the contents of the dish, since he had so amply paid for it.

CHAPTER LIX.

PITOU A REVOLUTIONIST.

PITOU wished, after having fulfilled the first duties of obedience, to satisfy the first feelings of his heart.

It is a very delightful feeling to obey, when the orders of the master are in perfect unison with the secret sympathies of the person who obeys.

He therefore made the best use of his legs; and going along the narrow alley which leads from the Pleux to the Rue de Lonnet, which forms a sort of green girdle to that portion of the town, he went straight across the fields that he might the sooner arrive at Billot's farm.

But his rapid course was soon slackened; every step he took brought back some recollection to his mind.

When any one returns to the town or to the village in which he was born, he walks upon his youth, — he walks on his past days, which spread themselves, as the English poet says, like a carpet beneath the feet, to do honour to the traveller who returns.

He finds at each step a recollection in the beatings of his heart.

Here he has suffered, there he has been happy; here he has sobbed with grief, there he has wept with joy.

Pitou, who was no analyser, was compelled to be a man. He discovered traces of the past as he proceeded on his way, and he arrived with his soul replete with sensations at the farm of Dame Billot.

When he perceived at a hundred paces before him the long, slated roofs, — when he measured with his eyes the

old elm trees bending down over the moss-grown chimneys, — when he heard the distant sound of the cattle, the barking of the dogs, the carts lumbering along the road, — he placed his helmet more proudly on his head, grasped his dragoon's sabre with more firmness, and endeavoured to give himself a martial appearance, such as was fitting to a lover and a soldier.

At first no one recognised him, — a proof that his effort was attended with tolerable success.

A stable boy was standing by the pond watering his horses, and, hearing a noise, turned round and through the branches of a willow tree he perceived Pitou, or rather a helmet and a sabre.

The stable boy seemed struck with stupefaction.

Pitou, on passing him, called out, —

“Hilloa! Barnaut! Good day, Barnaut!”

The boy, astounded that the helmet and sabre knew his name, took off his little hat, and let fall the halter by which he held the horses.

Pitou passed on smiling.

But the boy was by no means reassured; Pitou's benevolent smile had remained concealed beneath his helmet.

At the same moment Dame Billot perceived the approach of this military man through the windows of the dining-room.

She immediately jumped up.

In country places everybody was then on the alert; for alarming rumours were spread abroad of brigands who were destroying the forest trees, and cutting down fields of corn though still unripe.

What did the arrival of this soldier portend? Was it an attack, or was it assistance?

Dame Billot had taken a general survey of Pitou as he approached. She asked herself what could be the meaning of such country-looking garments with so brilliant a helmet; and we must confess her suppositions tended as much towards suspicion as towards hope.

The soldier, whoever he might be, went straight to the kitchen.

Dame Billot advanced two steps towards the new-comer. Pitou, on his side, that he might not be behindhand in politeness, took off his helmet.

"Ange Pitou!" she exclaimed; "you here, Ange?"

"Good day, Ma'am Billot," replied Pitou.

"Ange! Oh good Heaven! Who ever would have guessed it! Why, you have enlisted, then?"

"Oh! enlisted!" cried Pitou.

And he smiled somewhat disdainfully.

Then he looked around, seeking for one he did not find there.

Dame Billot smiled; she guessed the meaning of Pitou's looks.

Then, with great simplicity, —

"You are looking for Catherine?" she said.

"To pay my respects to her," replied Pitou; "yes, Madame Billot."

"She is attending to the drying of the linen. Come, now, sit down; look at me, speak to me."

"Very willingly," said Pitou. "Good day, good day, good day, Madame Billot."

And Pitou took a chair.

Around him were soon grouped, and at the doors and on the steps of the staircases, all the servant-maids and the farm labourers, to whom the stable boy had quickly communicated the arrival of the soldier.

And as each of them came in, they might be heard whispering, —

"Why, is it Pitou?"

"Yes, 't is he indeed!"

"Really!"

Pitou cast a benign glance on all his former comrades. His smile to most of them was a caress.

"And you have come from Paris, Ange?" said the mistress of the house.

"Straight, Madame Billot."

"And how is your master?"

"Very well, Madame Billot."

"And how are things going on in Paris?"

"Very badly."

"Ah!"

And the circle of auditors drew nearer.

"The king?" inquired the farmer's wife.

Pitou shook his head, and gave a clacking sound with his tongue, which was very humiliating for the monarchy.

"The queen?"

Pitou to this question made no reply at all.

"Oh!" exclaimed Madame Billot.

"Oh!" repeated all present.

"Come, now, speak on, Pitou," said Madame Billot.

"Well, ask me anything you please," replied Pitou, who did not wish to communicate all the interesting news he brought in the absence of Catherine.

"Why have you a helmet?" asked Madame Billot.

"It is a trophy," said Pitou.

"And what is a trophy, my friend?" inquired the good woman.

"Ah! that is true, Madame Billot," replied Pitou, with a protecting smile; "you cannot know what a trophy is. A trophy is when one has vanquished an enemy, Madame Billot."

"You have, then, vanquished an enemy, Pitou?"

"One!" replied Pitou, disdainfully. "Ah! my good Madame Billot, you do not know, then, that we two, Monsieur Billot and I, have taken the Bastile?"

This magic sentence electrified the audience. Pitou felt the breath of the astonished auditors upon his hair as they bent forward to gaze at him, and their hands on the back of his chair.

"Tell us, — tell us a little of what our man has done," said Madame Billot, with pride, but trembling with apprehension at the same time.

Pitou looked around to see if Catherine were coming; but she came not.

It appeared to him absolutely insulting that to hear such recent news, and brought by such a courier, Mademoiselle Billot did not at once leave her linen.

Pitou shook his head; he was beginning to be out of humour.

"Why, you see it would take a long time to tell it all," said he.

"And you are hungry?" inquired Madame Billot.

"It may be so."

"Thirsty?"

"I will not say no."

Instantly farm labourers and servants hastened to procure him refreshment, so that Pitou soon had within his reach a goblet, bread, meats and fruit of every description, before he had even reflected on the bearing of his answer.

Pitou had a warm liver, as they say in the country, — that is to say, he digested quickly; but, however quick might be his digestion, it was still amply occupied with Aunt Angelique's fowl and rice, not more than half an hour having elapsed since he had absorbed the last mouthful.

What he had asked for, therefore, did not enable him to gain so much time as he had anticipated, so rapidly had he been served.

He saw that it was necessary for him to make a desperate effort, and he set himself to work to eat.

But whatever may have been his good will, after a moment or two he was compelled to pause.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Madame Billot.

"Why, really, I must say —"

"Bring Pitou something to drink."

"I have cider here, Ma'am Billot."

"But perhaps you like brandy better?"

"Brandy?"

"Yes; perhaps you are accustomed to drink it in Paris?"

The worthy woman imagined that during twelve days' absence Pitou had had time enough to be corrupted.

Pitou indignantly repelled the supposition.

"Brandy!" cried he again, "and for me. Oh, never!"

"Well, then, speak."

"But if I now tell you the whole story," said Pitou, "I shall have to begin it again for Mademoiselle Catherine, and it is a very long one."

Two or three persons rushed out towards the laundry, to fetch Mademoiselle Catherine.

But while they were all running about in search of her, Pitou mechanically turned his head towards the staircase which led up to the first story of the house, and, being seated precisely opposite this staircase, he saw Mademoiselle Catherine through an open door looking out of a window.

Catherine was looking in the direction of the forest, — that is to say, towards Boursonne.

Catherine was so much absorbed in contemplation that the unusual movement in the house had not struck her; nothing within it had attracted her attention, which seemed to be wholly engrossed by what was happening without.

"Ah! ah!" cried he, sighing; "looking towards the forest, towards Boursonne, towards Monsieur Isidor de Charny. Yes, that is it."

And he heaved a second sigh, more melancholy than the first.

And at this moment the messengers returned, not only from the laundry, but from every place in which it was probable Mademoiselle Catherine might be found.

"Well?" inquired Madame Billot.

"We have not seen mademoiselle."

"Catherine! Catherine!" cried Madame Billot.

The young girl did not hear her.

Pitou then ventured to speak.

"Madame Billot," said he, "I well know why they did not find Mademoiselle Catherine at the laundry."

"And why did they not find her?"

"Because she is not there."

"You know, then, where she is?"

"Yes."

"Where is she, then?"

"Yonder, — upstairs."

And taking Dame Billot by the hand, he made her go up the three or four first steps of the staircase, and showed her Catherine, who was sitting on the sill of the window.

"She is dressing her hair," said the good woman.

"Alas! no, her hair is already dressed," replied Pitou, in a melancholy tone.

The farmer's wife paid no attention to Pitou's melancholy, but in a loud voice she called, —

"Catherine! Catherine!"

The young girl started with surprise, quickly closed her window, and said, —

"What is the matter?"

"Come down, then, Catherine!" cried Dame Billot, little doubting the joyful effect her words would produce upon her. "Come down here; here is Ange, just arrived from Paris."

Pitou, with great anxiety, listened for the answer which Catherine would make.

"Ah!" coldly replied Catherine.

So coldly, that poor Pitou's heart sank within him.

And she descended the staircase with all the phlegmatic manner of the Flemish women we see in the paintings of Van Ostade and Brauwer.

"Well," said she, when she reached the kitchen floor; "why, it is really Pitou."

Pitou bowed, blushing deeply, and trembling in every nerve.

"He has a helmet," said a servant-maid, whispering into her mistress's ear.

Pitou overheard her, and watched the effect produced on Catherine's countenance.

A lovely countenance, perhaps somewhat paler, but still full and peach-like.

But Catherine did not evince any admiration for Pitou's helmet.

"Ah! he has a helmet," she said; "and for what purpose?"

This time indignation mastered every other feeling in the mind of the bold youth.

"I have a helmet and a sabre," said he proudly, "because I have fought and killed German dragoons and Swiss soldiers; and if you doubt it, Mademoiselle Catherine, ask your father, and he will tell you."

Catherine's mind was so preoccupied that she heard only the last words uttered by Pitou.

"And how is my father?" inquired she. "How happens it that he did not return with you? Is there bad news from Paris?"

"Very bad," replied Pitou.

"I thought that everything had been arranged," observed Catherine.

"Yes, that is true; but everything is disarranged again," rejoined Pitou.

"Was there not a reconciliation between the king and the people, and was not Monsieur Necker recalled?"

"But little is thought of Monsieur Necker," said Pitou.

"And yet that satisfied the people, did it not?"

"It so well satisfied them that the people are now about to do themselves justice and to kill all their enemies."

"All their enemies!" exclaimed Catherine, with astonishment; "who, then, are the enemies of the people?"

"The aristocrats, to be sure," said Pitou.

Catherine turned pale.

"But who do they call aristocrats?" she asked.

"Why, those who have large estates, — those who have fine country-seats, — those who starve the nation, — those who have all, while we have nothing."

"Go on! go on!" impatiently cried Catherine.

"Those who have beautiful horses and fine carriages, when we are obliged to go on foot."

"Great God!" exclaimed the young girl, becoming so pale as to be positively livid.

Pitou remarked this change in her countenance.

"I call aristocrats some persons of your acquaintance."

"Of my acquaintance?"

"Of our acquaintance?" said Dame Billot.

"But who is it, then?" said Catherine, persistingly.

"Monsieur Berthier de Sauvigny, for instance."

"Monsieur Berthier de Sauvigny?"

"Who gave you the gold buckles which you wore the day you danced with Monsieur Isidor."

"Well?"

"Well, I saw people eating his heart, I who am now speaking to you."

A cry of terror was uttered by all present. Catherine threw herself back in the chair which she had taken.

"You saw that?" cried Madame Billot, trembling with horror.

"And Monsieur Billot saw it too."

"Oh, good God!"

"Yes, and by this time," continued Pitou, "they must have killed or burned all the aristocrats of Paris and Versailles."

"It is frightful!" murmured Catherine.

"Frightful! and why so? You are not an aristocrat, you, Mademoiselle Billot?"

"Monsieur Pitou," said Catherine with gloomy energy, "it appears to me that you were not so ferocious before you went to Paris."

"And I am not more so now, mademoiselle," said Pitou, somewhat staggered, "but —"

"But then do not boast of the crimes committed by the Parisians, since you are not a Parisian, and that you did not commit these crimes."

"I was so far from committing them," said Pitou, "that Monsieur Billot and myself narrowly escaped being murdered while defending Monsieur Berthier."

"Oh my good father! my brave father! I recognise him there!" enthusiastically exclaimed Catherine.

"My good, my worthy man!" cried Madame Billot, her eyes streaming with tears. "Tell me, what did he do?"

Pitou then related the whole of the dreadful scene which had occurred on the Place de Grève, the despair of Billot, and his desire to return to Villers-Cotterêts.

"Why did he not return, then?" cried Catherine, and in an accent that deeply moved Pitou's heart.

Dame Billot clasped her hands.

"Monsieur Gilbert would not allow it," replied Pitou.

"Does Monsieur Gilbert wish, then, that my husband should be killed?" said Madame Billot, sobbing.

"Does he wish, then, that my father's house should be ruined?" added Catherine, in the same tone of gloomy melancholy.

"Oh, by no means!" cried Pitou; "Monsieur Billot and Monsieur Gilbert understand each other. Monsieur Billot will remain still some time at Paris, to finish the revolution."

"What! by themselves, — all alone?" cried Dame Billot.

"No, with Monsieur Bailly and Monsieur de Lafayette."

"Ah!" cried the farmer's wife, with admiration, "if he indeed is with Monsieur de Lafayette and Monsieur Bailly —"

"When does he think of returning?" inquired Catherine.

"Oh! as to that, mademoiselle, I cannot tell."

"And you, Pitou, how happens it, then, that you have returned?"

"Who, — I? Why, I brought back Sébastien Gilbert to the Abbé Fortier, and I have come here to bring you Monsieur Billot's instructions."

Pitou, while saying these words, rose, not without a certain degree of diplomatic dignity, which was understood, if not by the servants, at all events by their mistresses.

Dame Billot rose, and at once dismissed all the labourers and servants.

Catherine, who had remained seated, studied the thoughts of Pitou, even in the depths of his soul, before they issued from his lips.

"What can he have told him to say to me?" she asked herself.

CHAPTER LX.

MADAME BILLOT ABDICATES.

THE two women summoned up all their attention to listen to the desires of this honoured husband and father. Pitou was well aware that the task was a difficult one; he had seen both Dame Billot and Catherine filling their several stations at the farm; he knew the habit of command of the one, and the firm independence of the other.

Catherine, who was so gentle a daughter, so laborious, so good, had acquired, by virtue of these very qualities, a very great ascendancy over every person connected with the farm; and what is the spirit of domination, if it is not a firm will not to obey?

Pitou knew, in explaining his mission, how much pleasure he was about to cause to the one, and how much grief he would inflict upon the other.

Reducing Madame Billot to play a secondary part appeared to him unnatural, absurd. It gave Catherine more importance with regard to Pitou, and under actual circumstances Catherine by no means needed this.

But at the farm he represented one of Homer's heralds, — a mouth, a memory, but not an intellectual person. He expressed himself in the following terms: —

"Madame Billot, Monsieur Billot's intention is that you should have the slightest possible annoyance."

"And how so?" cried the good woman, much surprised.

"What is the meaning of the word annoyance?" said Catherine.

"It means to say," replied Pitou, "that the manage-

ment of a farm like yours is a species of government replete with cares and labour, — that there are bargains to be made —”

“And what of that?” said the worthy woman.

“Payments —”

“Well?”

“Fields to plough —”

“Go on.”

“Money to be collected —”

“Who says the contrary?”

“No one, assuredly, Madame Billot; but in order to make bargains it is necessary to travel about.”

“I have my horse.”

“In paying, it is often necessary to dispute.”

“Oh, I have a good tongue.”

“To cultivate the fields.”

“Am I not accustomed to agriculture?”

“And to get in the harvest! Ah! that is quite another matter; meals have to be cooked for the labourers, the wagoners must be assisted.”

“For the welfare of my good man, to do all these would not frighten me,” cried the worthy woman.

“But, Madame Billot — in short — so much work — and — getting rather aged —”

“Ah!” cried Dame Billot, looking askance at Pitou.

“Come to my assistance, Mademoiselle Catherine,” said the poor lad, finding his energy diminishing by degrees as his position became more and more difficult.

“I do not know what I am to do to assist you,” replied Catherine.

“Well, then, this is the plain fact,” rejoined Pitou. “Monsieur Billot does not desire that Madame Billot should be subjected to so much trouble —”

“And who then?” cried she, interrupting him, trembling at once with admiration and respect.

“He has chosen some one who is stronger, and who is both himself and yourself. He has appointed Mademoiselle Catherine.”

"My daughter Catherine to govern the house!" exclaimed the wounded mother, with an accent of mistrust and inexpressible jealousy.

"Under your directions, my dear mother," the young girl hastened to say, and blushing deeply.

"By no means! by no means!" cried Pitou, who, from the moment he had summoned up courage enough to speak out, was determined to go through with it; "it is not so. I must execute my commission to the letter. Monsieur Billot delegates and authorises Mademoiselle Catherine in his stead and place to attend to all the work and all the affairs of the house."

Every one of these words, which bore the accent of truth, penetrated the heart of the housekeeper; and so excellent was her nature, that, instead of allowing the jealousy she had at first naturally felt to become more bitter, or her anger to become more violent, the certainty of her diminution in importance appeared to make her more resigned, more obedient, and more convinced of the infallibility of her husband's judgment.

Was it possible that Billot could be mistaken? Was it possible to disobey Billot?

These were the only two arguments which the worthy woman used to convince herself.

And her resistance at once ceased.

She looked at her daughter, in whose eyes she saw only modesty, confidence, the desire to succeed, unalterable tenderness and respect. She yielded absolutely.

"Monsieur Billot is right," she said; "Catherine is young; she has a good head, she is even headstrong."

"Oh, yes," said Pitou, certain that he had flattered the self-love of Catherine at the same time that he indulged in an epigram at her expense.

"Catherine," continued Dame Billot, "will be more at her ease than I should be upon the road. She could better look after the labourers for whole days than I could. She would sell better; she would make purchases with greater sureness; she would know how to make herself obeyed."

Catherine smiled.

"Well, then," continued the good woman, without even being compelled to make an effort to restrain a sigh, "here is our Catherine, who is going to have all her own way: she will run about as she pleases! she will now have the command of the purse! now she will always be seen upon the roads! my daughter, in short, transformed into a lad!"

"You need be under no apprehension for Mademoiselle Catherine," said Pitou, with a self-sufficient air; "I am here, and I will accompany her wherever she goes."

This gracious offer, on which Ange perhaps calculated to produce an effect, caused so strange a look on the part of Catherine that he was quite confused.

The young girl blushed,—not as women do when anything agreeable has been said to them, but with a sort of double feeling of anger and impatience, evincing at once a desire to speak and the necessity of remaining silent.

Pitou was not a man of the world, and therefore could not appreciate these shades of feeling. But having comprehended that Catherine's blushing was not a perfect acquiescence,—

"What!" said he, with an agreeable smile, which displayed his powerful teeth under his thick lips, "what! you say not a word, Mademoiselle Catherine?"

"You are not aware, then, Monsieur Pitou, that you have uttered a stupidity?"

"A stupidity!" exclaimed the lover.

"Assuredly!" cried Dame Billot; "to think of my daughter Catherine going about with a body guard."

"But, in short, in the woods—" said Pitou, with an air so ingenuously conscientious that it would have been a crime to laugh at him.

"Is that also in the instructions of our good man?" continued Dame Billot, who thus evinced a certain disposition for epigram.

"Oh!" added Catherine, "that would be too indolent a

profession, which neither my father would have advised Monsieur Pitou to adopt, nor would Monsieur Pitou have accepted it."

Pitou rolled his large and terrified eyes from Catherine to Dame Billot; the whole scaffolding of his building was giving way.

Catherine, as a true woman, at once comprehended the painful disappointment of Pitou.

"Monsieur Pitou," said she, "was it at Paris that you have seen young girls compromising their reputation in this way by always dragging young men after them?"

"But you are not a young girl, you," stammered Pitou, "since you are the mistress of the house."

"Come, come, we have talked enough for to-night," abruptly said Dame Billot. "The mistress of the house will have much to do to-morrow, when I shall give up the house to her, according to her father's orders. Come, Catherine, we must prepare for bed. Good night, Pitou."

Pitou bowed with great deference to the two ladies, which Catherine returned with a slight inclination of the head.

Poor Ange retired for the night to the small room he had formerly occupied at the farm, and although greatly disappointed at the coldness of Catherine's reception, he soon fell asleep, to which the fatigue of the day greatly induced.

The next morning he was up soon after daybreak, but saw nothing of Catherine until the whole family assembled at the breakfast table.

After this substantial repast was concluded, a ceremony was commenced before the astounded eyes of Pitou, — a ceremony that was not deficient in grandeur nor in poetry, from its rustic simplicity.

Dame Billot drew her keys from off the bunch, one by one, and delivered them to Catherine, giving her a list of the linen, of the furniture, the provisions, and the contents of the cellars. She conducted her daughter to the

old secretary, or bureau, made of mahogany inlaid with ivory and ebony, somewhere about the year 1738 or 1740, in the secret drawer of which Father Billot locked up his most valuable papers, his golden louis, and all the treasures and archives of the family.

Catherine gravely allowed herself to be invested with the supreme command over everything, and took due note of the secret drawers; she questioned her mother with much intelligence, reflected on each answer, and, the information she required being obtained, appeared to store it up in the depths of her memory, as a weapon in reserve in case of any contest.

After the furniture and household articles had been examined, Dame Billot went on to the cattle, the lists of which were carefully made out.

Horses, oxen and cows; sheep, whether in good order or sick; lambs, goats, fowls, and pigeons, — all were counted and noted down.

But this was merely a simple formality.

Of this branch of the farm business the young girl had for a long time past been the special administratrix.

There was scarcely a hen in the barnyard of which she did not know the cackle; the lambs were familiar with her in a month; the pigeons knew her so well that they would frequently completely surround her in their flight; often even they would perch upon her shoulders, after having cooed at her feet.

The horses neighed when Catherine approached. She alone could make the most restive of them obey. One of them, a colt bred upon the farm, was so vicious as to allow no one to approach him; but he would break his halter, and knock down his stall to get to Catherine, putting his nose into her hand, or into her pocket, to get at the crust of bread he was always sure of finding there.

Nothing was so beautiful or so smile inspiring as this lovely, fair-haired girl, with her large blue eyes, her white neck, her round arms, her small, fat hands, when she came

out with her apronful of corn to a spot near the pond where the ground had been beaten and saltpetred to harden it for a feeding place, and on which she would throw the grains she brought by handfuls.

Then would be seen all the young chickens, all the pigeons, all the young lambs, hurrying and scrambling towards the pond; the beaks of the birds soon made the flooring appear speckled, the red tongues of the young goats licked the ground, or picked up crisp buckwheat. This area, darkened by the layers of corn, in five minutes became as white and clean as the delft plate of the labourer when he has finished his meal.

Certain human beings have in their eyes a fascination that subdues, or a fascination that terrifies, — two sensations so powerful over the brute creation that they never think of resisting them.

Which of us has not seen a savage bull looking for several minutes, with melancholy expression, at a child who smiles at him without comprehending the danger he is running? He pities him.

Which of us has not seen the same bull fix a sinister and affrighted look on a robust farmer, who masters him by the steadiness of his gaze, and by a mute threat? The animal lowers his head, he appears to be preparing for the combat; but his feet seem rooted in the ground. He shudders; he is terrified.

Catherine exercised one of these two influences on all that surrounded her; she was at once so calm and so firm, there was so much gentleness and yet so much decided will, so little mistrust, so little fear, that the animal standing near her did not feel even the temptation of an evil thought.

And this extraordinary influence she, with greater reason, exercised over thinking beings. She possessed a charm that was irresistible; not a man in the whole district had ever smiled when speaking of Catherine; no young man entertained an evil thought towards her; those who loved

her wished to have her for their wife; those who did not love her would have desired that she were their sister.

Pitou, with head cast down, his hands hanging listless by his side, his ideas wandering, mechanically followed the young girl and her mother while they were taking a list of the farm stock.

They had not addressed a word to him. He was there like a guard in a tragedy; and his helmet did not a little contribute to give that singular appearance.

After this, they passed in review all the male and female servants of the farm.

Dame Billot made them form a half-circle, in the centre of which she placed herself.

"My children," said she, "our master is not yet coming back from Paris, but he has chosen a master for us in his place. It is my daughter Catherine, who is here; she is young and strong. As to myself, I am old, and my head is weak. Our master has done rightly. Catherine is now your mistress; she is to receive and give money. As to her orders, I shall be the first to receive and execute them; any of you who may be disobedient will have to deal with her."

Catherine did not add a single word; she tenderly embraced her mother. The effect of this kiss was greater than that of any well-rounded phrase. Dame Billot wept, Pitou was much affected.

All the servants received the announcement of the new reign with acclamations.

Catherine immediately entered on her new functions, and allotted to all their several services. Each received her mandate, and set out immediately to execute it, with the good-will which every one shows at the commencement of a reign.

Pitou was the only one remaining, and he at length, approaching Catherine, said to her, —

"And I?"

"Ah! you," replied Catherine; "I have no orders to give you."

"How! I am, then, to remain without having anything to do?"

"What do you wish to do?"

"Why, what I did before I went to Paris."

"Before going there, you were received into the house by my mother."

"But you are now the mistress; therefore, point out the work I am to do."

"I have no work for you, Monsieur Ange."

"And why?"

"Because you are a learned man, a Parisian gentleman, to whom such rustic labours would not be suitable."

"Can it be possible!" exclaimed Pitou.

Catherine made a sign, which implied, "It is even so."

"I a learned man!" repeated Pitou.

"Undoubtedly."

"But look at my arms, Mademoiselle Catherine."

"That matters not."

"But, in short, Mademoiselle Catherine," said the poor lad, in despair, "why is it that, under the pretext of my being a learned man, you would force me to die of hunger? You do not know, then, that the philosopher Epictetus became a menial servant that he might have bread to eat? — that Æsop, the fable writer, earned his bread by the sweat of his brow? They were, however, people much more learned than I am."

"What would you have? As I have said before, it is even so."

"But Monsieur Billot accepted me as forming part of his household, and he has sent me back from Paris that I may still be so."

"That may be the case; for my father might have compelled you to undertake things which I, his daughter, would not venture to impose upon you."

"Do not impose them upon me, Mademoiselle Catherine."

"But then you would remain in idleness, and that I could not at all allow. My father had the right to do so,

he being the master, and which I could not do, being merely his agent. I have charge of his property, and I must take care that his property be productive."

"But once I am willing to work, I shall be productive. You must see clearly, mademoiselle, that you keep swimming round in the same vicious circle."

"What say you?" cried Catherine, who did not comprehend the grandiloquent phrases of Pitou; "what mean you by a vicious circle?"

"We call a bad argument a vicious circle, mademoiselle. No, let me remain at the farm, and send me on your messages if you will. You will then see whether I am a learned man and an idle fellow. Besides which, you have books to keep, accounts to put in order. Arithmetic is my particular forte."

"It is not, in my opinion, sufficient occupation for a man," said Catherine.

"Why, then, it would seem I am fit for nothing," said Pitou.

"Continue to live here," said Catherine, in a gentler tone; "I will reflect upon it, and we will see."

"You require to reflect, in order that you may know whether you ought to keep me here. But what have I done to you, then, Mademoiselle Catherine? Ah! you were not thus formerly."

Catherine gave an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders.

She had no good reasons to give to Pitou, and nevertheless it was evident that his pertinacity fatigued her.

Therefore, breaking off the conversation, —

"Enough of this, Monsieur Pitou," said she; "I am going to La Ferté-Milon."

"Then I will run and saddle your horse, Mademoiselle Catherine."

"By no means; on the contrary, remain where you are."

"You refuse, then, to allow me to accompany you?"

"Remain here," said Catherine, imperatively.

Pitou remained as if nailed to the spot, holding down his head and restraining a tear, which seared his eyeballs as if it had been molten lead.

Catherine left Pitou where he was, went out, and ordered one of the farm servants to saddle her horse.

"Ah!" murmured Pitou, "you think me changed, Made-moiselle Catherine; but it is you who are so, and much more changed than I am."

CHAPTER LXI.

WHAT DECIDED PITOU TO LEAVE THE FARM AND RETURN TO HARAMONT, HIS REAL AND ONLY COUNTRY.

DAME BILLOT, resigned without affectation to undertake the functions of an upper servant, had, without ill-humour and with good-will, resumed her occupations. Movement, which had for an instant been suspended throughout the agricultural hierarchy, soon returned, and the farm once more resembled the interior of a humming and industrious hive.

While they were getting her horse ready, Catherine re-entered the house; she cast a glance at Pitou, whose body remained motionless, but whose head turned like a weather-cock, following each movement which the young girl made until she went up stairs to her own room.

"What was it Catherine had gone to her room for?" said Pitou to himself.

Poor Pitou! what had she gone there for? She went there to dress her hair, to put on a clean cap and a pair of finer stockings.

Then, when this supplementary toilet was completed, as she heard her horse pawing the ground beneath the window, she came down, kissed her mother, and set out.

Reduced to positive idleness, and feeling but ill assured from a slight glance, half indifferent, half compassionate, which Catherine had addressed to him as she left the door, Pitou could not endure to remain in such a state of anxious perplexity.

Since Pitou had once more seen Catherine, it appeared to him that the life of Catherine was absolutely necessary to him.

And, besides, in the depths of his heavy and dreaming mind, something like a suspicion came and went with the regularity of the pendulum of a clock.

It is the peculiar property of ingenuous minds to perceive everything in equal degree. These sluggish natures are not less sensible than others; they feel, but they do not analyse.

Analysis is the habit of enjoying and suffering; a man must have become, to a certain degree, habituated to sensations to see their ebullition in the depth of that abyss which is called the human heart.

There are no old men who are ingenuous.

When Pitou had heard the horse's footsteps at a certain distance from the house, he ran to the door. He then perceived Catherine, who was going along a narrow cross-road which led from the farm to the high road to La Ferté-Milon, and terminated at the foot of a hill whose summit was covered by a forest.

From the threshold of the door he breathed forth an adieu to the young girl, which was replete with regret and kindly feeling.

But this adieu had scarcely been expressed by his hand and heart, when Pitou reflected on one circumstance.

Catherine might have forbidden him to accompany her, but she could not prevent him from following her.

Catherine could, if she pleased, say to Pitou, "I will not see you;" but she could not very well say to him, "I forbid your looking at me."

Pitou therefore reflected that, as he had nothing to do, there was nothing in the world to prevent him from gaining the wood, and keeping along the road which Catherine was going; so that, without being seen, he could see her from a distance through the trees.

It was only a league and a half from the farm to La Ferté-Milon. A league and a half to go there, and a league and half to return. What was that to Pitou?

Moreover, Catherine would get to the highroad by a

line which formed an angle with the forest. By taking a straight direction, Pitou would gain a quarter of a league, so that the whole distance for him would be only two leagues and a half for the whole journey.

Two leagues and a half was a mere nothing of a walk for a man who appeared to have robbed Tom Thumb, or to have at least pilfered the seven-league boots which Tom had taken from the Ogre.

Pitou had scarcely imagined this project before he put it into execution.

While Catherine was going towards the highroad, he, Pitou, stooping down behind the high waving corn, stole across to the forest.

In an instant he had reached the border of the wood; and once there, he jumped across the wide ditch which bounded it, then rushed beneath the trees, less graceful, but as rapid as a terrified deer.

He ran for a quarter of an hour in this way, and at the end of that time he perceived the wood becoming lighter, for he had nearly reached the opposite edge near the road.

There he stopped, leaning against an enormous oak, which completely concealed him behind its knotted trunk. He felt perfectly sure that he had got ahead of Catherine.

He waited ten minutes—even a quarter of an hour—but saw no one.

Had she forgotten something at the farm that she should have taken with her? This was possible.

With the greatest possible precaution, Pitou crept near the road, stretched out his head from behind a great beech tree which grew upon the very edge of the ditch, belonging, as it were, half to the road, half to the forest. From this he had a good view of the plain, and could have perceived anything that was moving upon it; he however could discern nothing.

He felt assured, therefore, that Catherine must have returned to the farm.

Pitou retraced his steps. Either she had not yet reached

the farm, and he would see her return to it, or she had reached it, and he would see her come out again.

Pitou extended the compass of his long legs, and began to remeasure the distance which separated him from the plain.

He ran along the sandy part of the road, which was softer to his feet, when he suddenly paused.

Pitou had raised his eyes, and at the opposite end of the road he saw at a great distance, blending as it were with the blue horizon of the forest, the white horse and the red jacket of Catherine.

The pace of Catherine's horse was an amble.

The horse, ambling along, had left the high road, having turned into a bridle path, at the entrance of which was a direction post bearing the following inscription:—

“Path leading from the road of La Ferté-Milon to Boursonne.”

It was, as we have said, from a great distance that Pitou perceived this, but we know that distance was of no consequence to Pitou.

“Ah!” cried he, again darting into the forest, “it is not then to La Ferté-Milon that she was going, but to Boursonne! And yet I am not mistaken; she said La Ferté-Milon more than ten times; she had a commission given to her to make purchases at La Ferté-Milon. Dame Billot herself spoke of La Ferté-Milon.”

And while saying these words Pitou continued running. Pitou ran faster and faster still; Pitou ran like a madman.

For Pitou—urged on by doubt, the first symptom of jealousy—was no longer biped. Pitou appeared to be one of those winged machines, which Dædalus in particular, and the great mechanicians of antiquity in general, imagined so well, but, alas! executed so badly.

He greatly resembled, at that moment, those figures stuffed with straw, with long reed arms, placed over lay shops, and which the wind keeps turning in every direction.

Arms, legs, head, all are in motion, all are turning, all seem to be flying.

Pitou's immensely long legs measured paces of at least five feet, so widely could he distend them; his hands, like two broad bats at the end of two long sticks, struck upon the air like oars. His head—all mouth, all nostrils, and all eyes—absorbed the air, which they sent forth again in noisy breathings.

No horse could have been animated to so great a fury of speed.

No lion could have had a more ferocious desire of coming up with his prey.

Pitou had more than half a league to run when he perceived Catherine; he did not give her time enough to go a quarter of a league while he was running twice that distance.

His speed was therefore double that of a horse that was trotting.

At length he came to a line with the object of his pursuit.

The extremity of the forest was then not more than five hundred paces from him. He could see the light more clearly through the trees, and just beyond them was the estate of Boursonne.

Catherine pulled up her horse. Pitou instantly stopped.

It was time, for the poor devil's breath was fast failing him.

It was no longer merely for the purpose of seeing Catherine that Pitou followed her, — it was to watch her.

She had spoken that which was false. What could be her object?

That mattered not. In order to gain a certain degree of authority over her, it was necessary to surprise her, and prove that she had uttered a flagrant falsehood.

Pitou threw himself head foremost into the underwood and thorns, breaking through them with his helmet, and using his sabre to clear the way when it was necessary.

However, as Catherine was now only moving on at a walk, from time to time the crackling noise of a branch being broken reached her ear, which made both the horse and the mistress prick up their ears.

Then Pitou, whose eyes never for a moment lost sight of Catherine, stopped, which was of some advantage to him, as it enabled him to recover his breath, and it destroyed at the same time any suspicion that Catherine might entertain.

This, however, could not last long, nor did it.

Pitou suddenly heard Catherine's horse neigh, and this neighing was replied to by the neighing of another horse. The latter could not yet be seen.

But however this might be, Catherine gave hers a smart cut with her holly switch; and the animal, which had been blown for a few moments, set off again in full trot.

In about five minutes — thanks to this increase of speed — she had come up with a horseman, who had hastened towards her with as much eagerness as she had shown to reach him.

Catherine's movement had been so rapid and unexpected, that poor Pitou had remained motionless, standing in the same place, only raising himself on the tips of his toes that he might see as far as possible.

The distance was too great to enable him to see clearly.

But if he did not see, what Pitou felt as if it had been an electric shock was the delight and the blushing of the young girl. It was the sudden start which agitated her whole body; it was the sparkling of her eyes, usually so gentle, but which then became absolutely flashing.

Neither could he see who was the cavalier. He could not distinguish his features; but, recognising by his air, by his green velvet hunting coat, by his hat with its broad loop, by the easy and graceful motion of his head, that he must belong to the very highest class of society, his memory at once reverted to the very handsome young man, the elegant dancer of Villers-Cotterêts. His heart, his mouth,

every fibre of his nerves, murmured the name of Isidor de Charny.

And it was so in fact.

Pitou heaved a sigh, which was very much like a roar; and, rushing anew into the thicket, he advanced within twenty paces of the two young people, then too much occupied with each other to remark whether the noise they heard was caused by the rushing of a quadruped or of a biped through the underwood.

The young man, however, turned his head towards Pitou, raised himself up in his stirrups, and cast a vague look around him.

But at the same moment, and in order to escape this investigation, Pitou threw himself flat on his face.

Then, like a serpent, he glided along the ground about ten paces more, and having then got within hearing distance, he listened.

"Good day, Monsieur Isidor," said Catherine.

"Monsieur Isidor!" murmured Pitou; "I was sure of that."

He then felt as if the horseman and the horse were weighing on his poor heart, and trampling him under foot.

He then felt in all his limbs the immense fatigue of the race he had run, and which doubt, mistrust, and jealousy had urged him to during a whole hour.

The two young people had let fall their bridles, and had grasped each other's hands, and remained thus, mute and smiling, while the two horses, no doubt accustomed to each other, were rubbing their noses together, and pawing the green turf by the roadside.

"You are behind your time *to-day*," said Catherine, who was the first to speak.

"*To-day!*" exclaimed Pitou to himself; "it seems that on other days he was not behind time."

"It is not my fault, dear Catherine," replied the young man, "for I was detained by a letter from my brother,

which reached me only this morning, and to which I was obliged to reply by return of post. But fear nothing; to-morrow I will be more punctual."

Catherine smiled, and Isidor pressed still more tenderly the hand which had been left in his.

Alas! all these proofs of affection were so many thorns which made poor Pitou's heart bleed.

"You have, then, very late news from Paris?" she asked

"Yes."

"Well, then," continued she, smiling, "so have I. Did you not tell me the other day when similar things happened to two persons who loved each other, that it is called sympathy?"

"Precisely. And how did you receive your news, my lovely Catherine?"

"By Pitou."

"And who do you mean by Pitou?" asked the young nobleman, with a free and joyous air, which changed to scarlet the colour which had already overspread Pitou's cheeks.

"Why, you know full well," said she. "Pitou is the poor lad whom my father took into the farm, and who gave me his arm one Sunday."

Ah! yes," said the young gentleman, "he whose knees are like knots tied in a table napkin."

Catherine laughed. Pitou felt himself humiliated, and was in perfect despair. He looked at the knees, which were in fact like knots, raising himself on both hands and getting up, but he again fell flat on his face with a sigh.

"Come, now," said Catherine, "you must not so sadly ill-treat my poor Pitou. Do you know what he proposed to me just now?"

"No; but tell me what it was, my lovely one."

"Well, then, he proposed to accompany me to La Ferté-Milon."

"Where you are not going?"

"No, because I thought you were waiting for me here; while, on the contrary, it was I who almost had to wait for you."

"Ah! do you know you have uttered a royal sentence, Catherine?"

"Really! I am sure I did not imagine I was doing so."

"And why did you not accept the offer of this handsome cavalier? he would have amused us."

"Not always, perhaps," replied Catherine, laughing.

"You are right, Catherine," said Isidor, fixing his eyes, which beamed with love, on the beautiful girl.

And he caught the blushing face of the young girl in his arms, which he clasped round her neck.

Pitou closed his eyes that he might not see, but he had forgotten to shut his ears that he might not hear, and the sound of a kiss reached them.

Pitou clutched his hair in despair, as does the man afflicted with the plague in the foreground of Gros's picture representing Bonaparte visiting the soldiers attacked by the plague in the hospital at Jaffa.

When Pitou had somewhat recovered his equanimity, he found that the two young people had moved off to a little distance, and were proceeding on their way, walking their horses.

The last words which Pitou could catch were these:—

"Yes, you are right, Monsieur Isidor; let us ride together for an hour; my horse's legs shall make up the lost time. And," added she, laughing, "it is a good animal, who will not mention it to any one."

And this was all. The vision faded away. Darkness reigned in the soul of Pitou, as it began to reign over all nature, and, rolling upon the heather, the poor lad abandoned himself to the overwhelming feelings which oppressed his heart.

He remained in this state for some time; but the coolness of the evening at length restored him to himself.

"I will not return to the farm," said he; "I should only be humiliated, scoffed at. I should eat the bread of a woman who loves another man, and a man, I cannot but acknowledge, who is handsomer, richer, and more elegant than I am. No, my place is no longer at the farm, but at Haramont, — at Haramont, my own country, where I shall perhaps find people who will not think that my knees are like knots made in a table napkin."

Having said this, Pitou trotted his good long legs towards Haramont, where, without his at all suspecting it, his reputation and that of his helmet and sabre had preceded him, and where awaited him, if not happiness, at least a glorious destiny.

But it is well known it is not an attribute of humanity to be perfectly happy.

CHAPTER LXII.

PITOU AN ORATOR.

HOWEVER, on arriving at Villers-Cotterêts, towards ten o'clock at night, after having had the long run we have endeavoured to describe, Pitou felt that, however melancholy he might be, it was much better to stop at the Dauphin Hotel, and sleep in a good bed, than to sleep canopied by the stars, under some beech or oak in the forest.

For as to sleeping in a house at Haramont, arriving there at half-past ten at night, it was useless to think of it. For more than an hour and a half every light had been extinguished, and every door closed in that peaceful village.

Pitou therefore put up at the Dauphin Hotel, where, for a thirty-sous piece, he had an excellent bed, a four-pound loaf, a piece of cheese, and a pot of cider.

Pitou was both fatigued and in love, tired out and in despair. The result of this was a struggle between his moral and physical feelings, in which the moral were in the first instance victorious, but at length succumbed.

That is to say, that from eleven o'clock to two in the morning Pitou groaned, sighed, turned, and twisted in his bed, without being able to sleep a wink; but at two o'clock, overcome by fatigue, he closed his eyes, not to open them again till seven.

As at Haramont every one was in bed at half-past ten at night, so at Villers-Cotterêts everybody is stirring at seven in the morning.

Pitou, on leaving the Dauphin Hotel, again found that his helmet and sabre attracted public attention.

After going about a hundred paces, he consequently found himself the centre of a numerous crowd.

Pitou had decidedly acquired an enormous popularity.

There are few travellers who have such good luck. The sun, which, it is said, shines for the whole world, does not always shine with a favourable brilliancy for people who return to their own native place with the desire of being considered prophets.

But also it does not happen to every one to have an aunt crabbed and avaricious to so ferocious a degree as Aunt Angelique; it does not happen to every Gargantua capable of swallowing an old cock boiled with rice to be able to offer a half-crown to the proprietor of the victim.

But that which happens still less often to returning persons, whose origin and traditions can be traced back to the Odyssey, is to return with a helmet on their heads and a sabre by their sides; above all, when the rest of their accoutrements are far from being military.

For we must avow that it was above all this helmet and this sabre which recommended Pitou to the attention of his fellow citizens.

But for the vexations which Pitou's love encountered on his return, it has been seen that all sorts of good fortune awaited him. This was undoubtedly a compensation.

And, immediately on seeing him, some of the inhabitants of Villers-Cotterêts, who had accompanied Pitou from the Abbé Fortier's door in the Rue de Soissons to Dame Angelique's door in the Pleux, resolved, in order to continue the ovation, to accompany him from Villers-Cotterêts to Haramont.

And they did as they had resolved; on seeing which, the above-mentioned inhabitants of Haramont began to appreciate their compatriot at his just value.

It is, however, only justice to them to say that the soil was already prepared to receive the seed. Pitou's first

passage through Haramont, rapid as it had been, had left some traces in the minds of its inhabitants; his helmet and his sabre had remained impressed on the memories of those who had seen him appearing before them as a luminous apparition.

In consequence, the inhabitants of Haramont, seeing themselves favoured by this second return of Pitou, which they no longer hoped for, received him with every manifestation of respect and consideration, entreating him to doff for a time his warlike accoutrements, and fix his tent under the four linden trees which overshadowed the little village square, as the Thessalians used to entreat Mars on the anniversary of his great triumphs.

Pitou deigned the more readily to consent to this, from its being his intention to fix his domicile at Haramont. He therefore accepted the shelter of a bedroom, which a warlike person of the village let to him ready furnished

It was furnished with a deal bedstead, a straw bed, and a mattress, two chairs, a table, and a water-jug.

The rent of the whole of this was estimated by the proprietor himself at six francs per annum, — that is to say, the value of two dishes of fowl and rice.

The rent being agreed upon, Pitou took possession of his domicile, and supplied those who had accompanied him with refreshments at his own charge; and as these events, without speaking of the cider he had imbibed, had somewhat excited his brain, he proceeded to harangue them, standing on the threshold of his new residence.

This harangue of Pitou's was a great event, and consequently all Haramont was assembled round the house.

Pitou was somewhat of a clerk, and knew what fine language was; he knew the eight words by which at that period the haranguers of nations — it was thus Homer called them — stirred up the popular masses.

Between Monsieur de Lafayette and Pitou there was undoubtedly a great distance, but between Haramont and Paris the distance was greater still. Morally speaking, it will be clearly understood.

Pitou commenced by an exordium with which the Abbé Fortier, critical as he was, would not have been dissatisfied.

"Citizens," said he, "citizens, — this word is sweet to pronounce, — I have already addressed other Frenchmen by it, for all Frenchmen are brothers; but on this spot I am using it, I believe, towards real brothers, and I find my whole family here in my compatriots of Haramont."

The women, — there were some few among the auditory, and they were not the most favourably disposed towards the orator, for Pitou's knees were still too thick, and the calves of his legs too thin, to produce an impression in his favour on a feminine audience, — the women, on hearing the word family, thought of that poor Pitou, the orphan child, the poor abandoned lad, who since the death of his mother had never had a meal that satisfied his hunger. And this word family, uttered by a youth who had none, moved in some among them that sensitive fibre which closes the reservoir of tears.

The exordium being finished, Pitou began the narrative, the second head of an oration.

He related his journey to Paris, the riots with regard to the busts, the taking of the Bastile, and the vengeance of the people; he passed lightly over the part he had taken in the combats on the Place Vendôme, the square before the Palais Royal, and in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. But the less he boasted, the greater did he appear in the eyes of his compatriots; and at the end of Pitou's narrative his helmet had become as large as the dome of the Invalides, and his sabre as long as the steeple of Haramont church.

The narrative being ended, Pitou then proceeded to the confirmation, that delicate operation by which Cicero recognised a real orator.

He proved that popular indignation had been justly excited against speculators; he said two words of Messieurs Pitt, father and son; he explained the revolution by the privileges granted to the nobility and to the clergy; finally,

he invited the people of Haramont to do that in particular which the people of France had done generally, — that is to say, to unite against the common enemy.

Then he went on from the confirmation to the peroration, by one of those sublime changes common to all great orators.

He let fall his sabre, and, while picking it up, he accidentally drew it from its scabbard.

This accident furnished him with a text for an incendiary resolution, calling upon the inhabitants of Haramont to take up arms, and to follow the example of the revolted Parisians.

The people of Haramont were enthusiastic, and replied energetically.

The revolution was proclaimed with loud acclamation throughout the village.

The men from Villers-Cotterêts who had remained at the meeting returned home, their hearts swelling with the patriotic leaven, singing in the most threatening tones towards the aristocrats, and with savage fury:—

“Vive Henri Quatre!
Vive ce roi vaillant!”

Rouget de l'Isle had not then composed the “Marseillaise,” and the Federalists of '90 had not yet reawakened the old popular “Ça ira,” seeing that they were then only in the year of grace 1789.

Pitou thought that he had merely made a speech. Pitou had made a revolution.

He re-entered his own house, regaled himself with a piece of brown bread and the remains of his cheese from the Dauphin Hotel, which he had carefully stowed away in his helmet; then he went and bought some brass wire, made some snares, and when it was dark went to lay them in the forest.

That same night Pitou caught a good-sized rabbit, and a young one about four months old.

Pitou would have much wished to have set his wires for hares, but he could not discern a single run, and this proved to him the correctness of the old sporting axiom, "Dogs and cats, hares and rabbits, live not together."

It would have been necessary to travel three or four leagues before reaching a country well stocked with hares, and Pitou was rather fatigued; his legs had done their utmost the day before, for, besides the distance they had performed, they had carried for the last four or five leagues a man worn out with grief, and there is nothing so heavy as grief to long legs.

Towards one in the morning he returned with his first harvest: he hoped to gather another after the passage in the morning.

He went to bed, retaining within his breast remains of so bitter a nature of that grief which had so much fatigued his legs the day before, that he could only sleep six hours consecutively upon the atrocious mattress, which the proprietor himself called a shingle.

Pitou therefore slept from one o'clock to seven. The sun was therefore shining upon him through his open shutter while he was sleeping.

Through this open shutter, thirty or forty inhabitants of Haramont were looking at him as he slept.

He awoke as Turenne did on his gun-carriage, smiled at his compatriots, and asked them graciously why they had come to him in such numbers and so early.

One of them had been appointed spokesman. We shall faithfully relate this dialogue. This man was a wood-cutter, and his name Claude Tellier.

"Ange Pitou," said he, "we have been reflecting the whole night; citizens ought in fact, as you said yesterday, to arm themselves in the cause of liberty."

"I said so," replied Pitou, in a firm tone, which announced that he was ready to maintain what he had said.

"Only, in order to arm ourselves, the principal thing is wanting."

"And what is that?" asked Pitou, with much interest.

"Arms!"

"Ah! yes, that is true," said Pitou.

"We have, however, reflected enough not to allow our reflections to be lost, and we will arm ourselves, cost what it may."

"When I went away," said Pitou, "there were five guns in Haramont; three muskets, a single-barrelled fowling-piece, and a double-barrelled one."

"There are now only four," rejoined the orator; "one of the fowling-pieces burst from old age a month ago."

"That must have been the fowling-piece which belonged to Désiré Maniquet," said Pitou.

"Yes; and, by token, when she burst she carried off two of my fingers," said Désiré Maniquet, holding above his head his mutilated hand; "and as this accident happened to me in the warren of that aristocrat who is called Monsieur de Longpré, the aristocrats shall pay me for it."

Pitou nodded his head to show that he approved this just revenge.

"We therefore have only four guns left," rejoined Claude Tellier.

"Well, then, with four guns you have already enough to arm five men," said Pitou.

"How do you make that out?"

"Oh, the fifth will carry a pike! That is the way they do at Paris; for every four men armed with guns there is always one man armed with a pike. Those pikes are very convenient things, — they serve to stick the heads upon which have been cut off."

"Oh! oh!" cried a loud, joyous voice, "it is to be hoped that we shall not cut off heads."

"No," gravely replied Pitou; "if we have only firmness enough to reject the gold of Messieurs Pitt, father and son. But we were talking of guns; let us not wander from the question, as Monsieur Bailly says. How many men have

we in Haramont capable of bearing arms? Have you counted them?"

"Yes."

"And how many are you?"

"We are thirty-two."

"Then there are twenty-eight muskets deficient?"

"Which we shall never get," said the stout man with the good-humoured face.

"Ah," said Pitou, "it is necessary to know that."

"And how is it necessary to know?"

"Yes, I say it is necessary to know, because I know."

"What do you know?"

"I know where they are to be procured."

"To be procured?"

"Yes; the people of Paris had no arms either. Well, Monsieur Marat, a very learned doctor, but very ugly, told the people of Paris where arms were to be found; the people of Paris went where Monsieur Marat told them, and there they found them."

"And where did Marat tell them to go?" inquired Désiré Manquet.

"He told them to go to the Invalides."

"Yes; but we have no Invalides at Haramont."

"But I know a place in which there are more than a hundred guns," said Pitou.

"And where is that?"

"In one of the rooms of the Abbé Fortier's college."

"The Abbé Fortier has a hundred guns? He wishes, then, to arm his singing boys, the beggarly black cap!" cried Claude Tellier.

Pitou had not a deep-seated affection for the Abbé Fortier; however, this violent outburst against his former professor profoundly wounded him.

"Claude!" cried he, "Claude!"

"Well! what now?"

"I did not say that the guns belong to the Abbé Fortier."

"If they are in his house, they belong to him."

"That position is a false one. I am in the house of Bastien Godinet, and yet the house of Bastien Godinet does not belong to me."

"That is true," said Bastien, replying, without giving Pitou occasion to appeal to him directly.

"The guns, therefore, do not belong to the Abbé Fortier," continued Pitou.

"Whose are they, then?"

"They belong to the township."

"If they belong to the township, how does it happen that they are in the Abbé Fortier's house?"

"They are in the Abbé Fortier's house because the house in which the Abbé Fortier lives belongs to the township, who gives it to him rent free because he says mass and teaches the children of poor citizens gratis. Now, since the Abbé Fortier's house belongs to the township, the township has a right to reserve a room in the house that belongs to it, to put its muskets; ah!"

"That is true," said the auditors, "the township has the right."

"Well, then, let us see; how are we to get hold of these guns? Tell us that."

The question somewhat embarrassed Pitou, who scratched his ear.

"Yes, tell us quickly," cried another voice, "for we must go to our work."

Pitou breathed again: the last speaker had opened to him a door for escape.

"Work!" exclaimed Pitou. "You speak of arming yourselves for the defence of the country, and you think of work!"

And Pitou accompanied his words with a laugh so ironical and so contemptuous that the Haramontese looked at each other and felt humiliated.

"We would not mind sacrificing a few days more, should it be absolutely necessary," said the other, "to gain our liberty."

"To gain our liberty," cried Pitou, "it will be necessary to sacrifice more than a day, — we must sacrifice all our days."

"Then," said Boniface, "when people are working for liberty they are resting."

"Boniface," replied Pitou, with the air of Lafayette when irritated, "those will never know how to be free who know not how to trample prejudices under foot."

"As to myself," said Boniface, "I ask nothing better than not to work; but what is to be done, then, with regard to eating?"

"Do people eat?" cried Pitou, disdainfully.

"At Haramont they do so yet. Do they no longer eat at Paris?"

"They eat when they have vanquished the tyrants," replied Pitou. "Did any one eat on the 14th of July? Did they even think of eating on that day? No; they had not time even to think of it."

"Ah! ah!" cried some of the most zealous, "the taking of the Bastille must have been a fine sight."

"But," continued Pitou, disdainfully, "as to drinking, I will not say. No; it was so hot, and gunpowder has so acrid a taste."

"But what had they to drink?"

"What had the people to drink? why, water, wine, and brandy. It was the women who had taken this in charge."

"The women?"

"Yes, and handsome women too, who had made flags of the front part of their dresses."

"Can it be possible!" cried the auditors with astonishment.

"But at all events," observed the sceptic, "they must have eaten the next day."

"I do not say that they did not," replied Pitou.

"Then," rejoined Boniface triumphantly, "if they ate they must have worked."

"Monsieur Boniface," replied Pitou, "you are speaking of things without understanding them. Paris is not a

hamlet. It is not composed of a heap of villagers, accustomed to think only of their bellies, — *obedientia ventri*, as we say in Latin, we who are learned. No; Paris, as Monsieur de Mirabeau says, is the head of all nations; it is a brain which thinks for the whole world. The brain, monsieur, never eats."

"That is true," thought the auditors.

"And yet," said Pitou, "the brain, though it does not eat, still feeds itself."

"But then how does it feed itself?" answered Boniface.

"Invisibly, with the nutriment of the body."

Here the Haramontese were quite at a loss; the question was too profound for them to understand.

"Explain this to us, Pitou," said Boniface.

"That is easily done," replied Pitou. "Paris is the brain, as I have said; the provinces are the members; the provinces will work, drink, eat, and Paris will think."

"Then I will leave the provinces and go to Paris," rejoined the sceptical Boniface. "Will you come to Paris with me, my friends?"

A portion of the audience burst into a loud laugh, and appeared to side with Boniface.

Pitou perceived that he would be discredited by this sarcastic railer.

"Go, then, to Paris," cried he in his turn, "and if you find there a single face as ridiculous as yours, I will buy of you such young rabbits as this at a louis apiece."

And with one hand Pitou held up the young rabbit he had caught, and with the other made the louis which remained of Doctor Gilbert's munificence jingle in his pocket.

Pitou this time had the laugh in his favour.

Upon this Boniface became positively purple with rage.

"Why, Master Pitou, you are playing the insolent to call us ridiculous."

"Ridiculous thou art," majestically replied Pitou.

"But look at yourself," retorted Boniface.

"It would be but to little purpose," replied Pitou. "I might see something as ugly as yourself, but never anything half so stupid."

Pitou had scarcely said these words, when Boniface — at Haramont they are almost as passionate as in Picardy — struck at him with his fist, which Pitou adroitly parried, but to which he replied by a kick in the true Parisian fashion.

This kick was followed by a second, which sent the sceptic flying some few feet, when he fell heavily to the ground.

Pitou bent down over his adversary, so as to give the victory the most fatal consequences, and all were already rushing to save poor Boniface, when Pitou, raising himself up, —

"Learr," said he, "that the conquerors of the Bastile do not fight with fists. I have a sabre, take another sabre, and let us end the matter at once."

Upon this, Pitou drew his sword, forgetting, or perhaps not forgetting, that the only sabre in all Haramont was his own, with the exception of that of the rural guard, at least two feet shorter than his own.

It is true that to establish a more perfect equilibrium he put on his helmet.

This greatness of soul electrified the assembly. It was agreed by all that Boniface was a rascallion, a vile fellow, an ass unworthy of being admitted to share in any discussion on public affairs.

And consequently he was expelled.

"You see, then," said Pitou, "the image of the revolution of Paris, as Monsieur Prudhomme or Loustalot has said, — I think it was the virtuous Loustalot who said it. Yes, 't was he, I am now certain of it : —

"The great appear to us to be great solely because we are upon our knees: let us stand up.'"

This epigram had not the slightest bearing on the question in dispute, but perhaps for that very reason it produced a prodigious effect.

The sceptic Boniface, who was standing at a distance of twenty paces, was struck by it, and he returned to Pitou, humbly saying to him, —

“You must not be angry with us, Pitou, if we do not understand liberty as well as you do.”

“It is not liberty,” said Pitou, “but the rights of man.”

This was another blow with the sledge-hammer with which Pitou a second time felled the whole auditory.

“Decidedly,” said Boniface, “you are a learned man, and we pay homage to you.”

Pitou bowed.

“Yes,” said he, “education and experience have placed me above you; and if just now I spoke to you rather harshly, it was from my friendship for you.”

Loud applause followed this. Pitou saw that he could now give vent to his eloquence.

“You have just talked of work,” said he, “but do you know what work is? To you, labour consists in splitting wood, in reaping the harvest, in picking up beech-mast, in tying up wheat-sheaves, in placing stones one above another, and consolidating them with cement. In your opinion, I do not work at all. Well, then, you are mistaken, for I alone labour much more than you do all together, for I am meditating your emancipation, for I am dreaming of your liberty, of your equality. A moment of my time is therefore of more value than a hundred of your days. The oxen who plough the ground do but one and the same thing; but the man who thinks surpasses all the strength of matter. I, by myself, am worth the whole of you. Look at Monsieur Lafayette; he is a thin, fair man, not much taller than Claude Tellier. He has a pointed nose, thin legs, and arms as small as the back joints of this chair. As to his hands and feet, it is not worth while to mention them. A man might as well be without. Well! this man has carried two worlds on his shoulders, which is one more than Atlas did, and his little hands have broken the chains of America and France.

"Now, as his arms have done all this, arms not thicker than the back railing of a chair, only imagine to yourselves what arms like mine can do."

And Pitou bared his arms, which were as knotty as the trunk of a holly tree.

And having drawn this parallel he paused, well assured that he had produced, without coming to a regular conclusion, an immense effect.

And he had produced it.

CHAPTER LXIII.

PITOU A CONSPIRATOR.

THE greater portion of events which happen to man, and which confer on him great happiness or great honours, are almost always brought about from his having fervently desired or much disdained.

If this maxim were duly applied to events and to men cited in history, it would be found that it possesses not only profundity, but also truth.

We shall, however, content ourselves, without having recourse to proofs, with applying it to Ange Pitou, our man, and our history.

In fact, Pitou, if we are allowed to retrograde a few steps, and to return to the wound which he had received straight to the heart,—Pitou had in fact, after the discovery he had made on the borders of the forest, been seized with a withering disdain for the things of this nether world.

He who had hoped to find blossom within his heart that rare and precious plant which mortals denominate Love, —he who had returned to his own province with a helmet and a sabre, proud of thus associating Mars and Venus, as was said by his illustrious compatriot, Demoustier, in his "Letters to Emilie on Mythology," found himself completely taken aback, and very unhappy, on perceiving that there existed at Villers-Cotterêts and its neighbourhood more lovers than were necessary.

He who had taken so active a part in the crusade of the Parisians against the nobility found himself but very insignificant in opposition to the country nobility, represented by Monsieur Isidor de Charny.

Alas! so handsome a youth, a man likely to please even at first sight, a cavalier who wore buckskin breeches and a velvet riding coat.

'How would it be possible to contend against such a man!

With a man who had long riding boots, and spurs on the heels of those boots, — with a man whose brother many people still called Monseigneur!

How was it possible to contend against such a rival! How could he avoid at once feeling shame and admiration, two feelings which, to the heart of a lover, inflict a double torture, — a torture so frightful that it has never yet been decided whether a jealous man prefers a rival of higher or lower condition than himself!

Pitou therefore but too well knew the pangs of jealousy, the wounds of which are incurable and fertile in agony, and of which up to this time the ingenuous heart of our hero had remained ignorant, — jealousy, a plant of marvelous and venomous growth, which springs up without seed being sown from a soil that has never germinated any noxious passion, not even self-love, that evil root which chokes up even the most sterile lands.

A heart thus tortured stands in need of much philosophy in order to regain its habitual calmness.

Was Pitou a philosopher, — he who, the day following that on which he had experienced this sensation, could think of waging war against the hares and rabbits of his Highness the Duke of Orleans, and the day after that of making the long harangues we have reported?

Was his heart, then, as hard as flint, from which every fresh blow draws a spark? Or did it possess only the soft resistance of a sponge, which has the quality of absorbing tears, and of mollifying without receiving a wound the shock of every misfortune?

This the future will indubitably testify; therefore let us not prejudge, but go on with our story.

After having received the visit we have related, and

his harangues being terminated, Pitou, compelled by his appetite to attend to minor matters, set to work and cooked his young rabbit, regretting that it was not a hare.

But in fact, had the rabbit been really a hare, Pitou would not have eaten, but would have sold it.

That would not have been a very trifling concern. A hare, according to its size, is worth from eighteen to twenty-four sous; and although he was still the possessor of a few louis given to him by Doctor Gilbert, Pitou, without being as avaricious as his Aunt Angelique, had a good dose of economy, which he had inherited from his mother. Pitou would therefore have added eighteen sous to his treasure, which would thus have been increased instead of diminished.

For Pitou had justly reflected that it was not necessary for a man to make repasts which would cost him one day half a crown, another eighteen sous. He was not a Lucullus; and Pitou said that with the eighteen sous his hare would have brought him he could have lived during a whole week!

Now, during that week, supposing that he had caught a hare on the first day, he might very well have taken three during the six following days, or rather the six following nights. In a week, therefore, he would have gained food for a month.

Following up this calculation, forty-eight hares would have sufficed for a year's keep; all the rest would have been clear profit.

Pitou entered into this economical calculation while he was eating his rabbit; which, instead of bringing him anything, cost him a sou's worth of butter and a sou's worth of lard. As to the onions, he had gleaned them upon the common land.

"After a repast, the fireside or a walk," says the proverb. After his repast, Pitou went into the forest to seek a snug corner where he could take a nap.

It is scarcely necessary to say that as soon as the un-

fortunate youth had finished talking politics, and found himself alone, he had incessantly before his eyes the spectacle of Monsieur Isidor making love to Mademoiselle Catherine.

The oaks and beech trees trembled with his sighs; nature, which always smiles on well-filled stomachs, made one exception in regard to Pitou, and appeared to him a vast dark desert, in which there remained only rabbits, hares, and deer.

Once hidden beneath the tall trees of his natal forest, Pitou, inspired by their cool and invigorating shade, became more firm in his heroic resolution, and this was to disappear from before the eyes of Catherine, — to leave her altogether free, and not to affect himself extravagantly as to her preference of another, that he might not be more humiliated than was necessary by invidious comparison.

It was a highly painful effort to abstain from seeing Mademoiselle Catherine; but a man ought to be a man.

Moreover, this was not precisely the case in question.

The question was not exactly that he should no more see Mademoiselle Catherine, but that he should not be seen by her.

Now, what was there to prevent the condemned lover from carefully concealing himself and catching a glance of the cruel fair one? Nothing.

From Haramont to the farm, what was the distance? Scarcely a league and a half, — that is to say, a few strides, — that was all.

Although it would have been base on the part of Pitou to have continued his attentions to Catherine after what he had seen, it would be so much the more adroit in him to continue to ascertain her acts and conduct, thanks to a little exercise, which could not but be favourable to Pitou's health.

Moreover, that portion of the forest behind the farm and extending towards Boursonville abounded in hares.

Pitou would go at night to lay his wires, and the next

morning, from the top of some high hillock, he would cast his eyes over the plain and watch Mademoiselle Catherine's doings. This he had the right to do; this, to a certain point, was his duty, being the authorised agent, as he undoubtedly was, of Father Billot.

Thus, having consoled himself, and as it were in spite of himself, Pitou thought he might cease sighing. He dined off an enormous slice of bread he had brought with him, and when the evening had closed in he laid a dozen wires and threw himself down upon the heather, still warm from the sun's rays.

There he slept like a man in utter despair, — that is to say, his sleep was almost as undisturbed as that of death.

The coolness of the night awoke him; he went to examine his wires. Nothing had been taken; but Pitou calculated always more upon the morning passage; only, as his head felt somewhat heavy, he determined on returning to his lodgings, and looking to his wires the following day.

But this day, which to him had passed by so devoid of events and intrigues, had been passed in a very different manner by the inhabitants of the hamlet, who had employed it in reflecting and in making combinations.

It might have been seen towards the middle of that day which Pitou had passed dreaming in the forest, — the woodcutters, we say, might have been seen leaning contemplatively upon their hatchets; the threshers with their flails suspended in the air, meditating; the joiners stopping their planes upon a half-smoothed plank.

Pitou was the first great cause of all this loss of time; Pitou had been the breath of discord which had stirred these straws which began to whirl about confusedly.

And he, the occasion of all this agitation, had not even thought one moment on the subject.

But at the moment when he was going towards his own lodging, although the clock had struck ten, and usually at that hour not a single light was to be seen, not an eye was still open in the village, he perceived a very unaccustomed

scene around the house which he resided in. He saw a number of men seated in groups, a number standing in groups, several groups walking up and down.

The aspect of these groups was altogether singular.

Pitou, without knowing why, imagined that all these people were talking of him.

And when he passed through the street, they all appeared as if struck by an electric shock, and pointed at him as he passed.

"What can the matter be with them all!" said Pitou to himself. "I have not my helmet on."

And he modestly retired to his own lodging, after having exchanged salutations with a few of the villagers as he passed by them.

He had scarcely shut the door of his house when he thought he heard a slight knock upon the door-post.

Pitou was not in the habit of lighting a candle to undress by. A candle was too great a luxury for a man who paid only six francs a year for his lodgings, and who, having no books, could not read.

But it was certain that some one was knocking at his door.

He raised the latch.

Two of the young inhabitants of the village familiarly entered his abode.

"Why, Pitou, you have not a candle," said one of them.

"No," replied Pitou; "of what use would it be?"

"Why, that one might see."

"Oh! I see well at night; I am a nyctalops."

And in proof of this, he added,—

"Good evening, Claude! Good evening, Désiré!"

"Well!" they both cried, "here we are, Pitou!"

"This is a kind visit; what do you desire of me, my friends?"

"Come out into the light," said Claude.

"Into the light of what? There is no moon."

"Into the light of heaven."

"You have, then, something to say to me?"

"Yes, we would speak with you, Ange."

And Claude emphasised these words with a singular expression.

"Well, let us go, then," said Pitou.

And the three went out together.

They walked on until they reached the first open space in the road, Ange Pitou still not knowing what they wanted of him.

"Well?" inquired Pitou, seeing that his two companions stopped.

"You see now, Ange," said Claude, "here we are, Désiré Maniquet and myself. We manage to lead all our companions in the country. Will you be one of us?"

"To do what?"

"Ah! that is the question. It is to —"

"To do what?" said Pitou, drawing himself up to his full height.

"To conspire!" murmured Claude in Pitou's ear.

"Ah! ah! as they do at Paris," said Pitou, jeeringly.

The fact is, that he was fearful of the word, and of the echo of the word, even in the midst of the forest.

"Come, now, explain yourself," said Pitou to Claude, after a short pause.

"This is the case," said the latter. "Come nearer. Désiré, you who are a poacher to your very soul, and who know all the noises of the day and night, of the plain and of the forest, look around and see if we have been followed; listen whether there be any one attempting to overhear us."

Désiré gave an assenting nod, took a tolerably wide circuit around Pitou and Claude, and, having peeped into every bush and listened to every murmur, returned to them.

"You may speak out," said he, "there is no one near us."

"My friends," rejoined Claude, "all the townships of France, as Pitou has told us, desire to be armed, and on the footing of National Guards."

"That is true!" said Pitou.

"Well, then, why should Haramont not be armed like the other townships?"

"You said why, only yesterday, Claude," replied Pitou, "when I proposed my resolution that we should arm ourselves. Haramont is not armed because Haramont has no muskets."

"Oh! as to muskets, we need not be uneasy about them, since you know where they are to be had."

"I know! I know!" said Pitou, who saw at what Claude was aiming, and who felt the danger of the proceeding.

"Well," continued Claude, "all the patriotic young fellows of the village have been consulting together to-day."

"Good!"

"And there are thirty-three of us."

"That is the third of a hundred, less one," added Pitou.

"Do you know the manual exercise?" inquired Claude.

"Do I not!" exclaimed Pitou, who did not even know how to shoulder arms.

"Good! and do you know how to manœuvre a company?"

"I have seen General Lafayette manœuvring forty thousand men at least ten times," disdainfully replied Pitou.

"That is all right," said Désiré, tired of remaining silent, and who, without intending to presume, wished to put in a word in his turn.

"Well, then, will you command us?" said Claude to Pitou.

"Who, — I?" exclaimed Pitou, starting with surprise.

"Yes, you, — yourself."

And the two conspirators intently eyed Pitou.

"Oh! you hesitate," cried Claude.

"Why —"

"You are not then a good patriot?" said Désiré.

"Oh! that, for example —"

"There is something, then, that you are afraid of?"

"What, I? I, a conqueror of the Bastile, — a man to whom a medal is awarded?"

"You have a medal awarded you?"

"I shall have one as soon as the medals have been struck. Monsieur Billot has promised to apply for mine in my name."

"He will have a medal! We shall have a chief who has a medal!" exclaimed Claude in a transport of joy.

"Come, now, speak out," said Désiré; "will you accept the appointment?"

"Do you accept?" asked Claude.

"Well, then, yes; I will accept it," said Pitou, carried away by his enthusiasm, and also perhaps by a feeling which was awakening within him, and which is called pride.

"It is agreed; from to-morrow morning you will be our commander."

"And what shall I command you to do?"

"Our exercise, to be sure."

"And the muskets?"

"Why, since you know where there are muskets —"

"Oh! yes, at the house of the Abbé Fortier."

"Undoubtedly."

"Only it is very likely the Abbé Fortier will refuse to let me have them."

"Well, then, you will do as the patriots did at the Invalides, you will take them."

"What, I alone?"

"You will have our signatures, and, should it be necessary, you shall have our hands too. We will cause a rising in Villers-Cotterêts, — but we will have them."

Pitou shook his head.

"The Abbé Fortier is a very obstinate man," said he.

"Pooh! you were his most favourite pupil; he would not be able to refuse you anything."

"It is easy to perceive that you do not know him," cried Pitou, with a sigh.

"How! do you believe the old man would refuse?"

"He would refuse them even to a squadron of the Royal

Germans. He is dreadfully obstinate, *injustum et tenacem*. But I forgot, you do not even understand Latin," added Pitou, with much compassion.

But the two Haramontese did not allow themselves to be dazzled either by the quotation or the apostrophe.

"Ah! in good truth," said Désiré, "we have chosen an excellent chief, Claude; he is alarmed at everything."

Claude shook his head.

Pitou perceived that he was compromising his high position; he remembered that fortune always most favoured those who possess most audacity.

"Well, be it so," said he; "I will consider it."

"You, then, will manage the affair of the muskets?"

"I will promise to do all I can."

An expression of satisfaction was uttered by his two friends, replacing the slight discontent they had before manifested.

"Ho! ho!" said Pitou to himself, "these men want to dictate to me, even before I am their chief; what will they do, then, when I shall be so in reality?"

"Do all you can," said Claude, shaking his head. "Oh! oh! that is not enough."

"If that is not enough," replied Pitou, "try you to do more. I give up my command to you. Go and see what you can make of the Abbé Fortier and his cat-o'-nine-tails."

"That would be well worth while," said Maniquet, disdainfully. "It is a pretty thing, indeed, for a man to return from Paris with a helmet and a sabre, and then to be afraid of a cat-o'-nine-tails."

"A helmet and a sabre are not a cuirass; and even if they were, the Abbé Fortier would still find a place on which to apply his cat-o'-nine-tails."

Claude and Désiré appeared to comprehend this observation.

"Come, now, Pitou, my son," said Claude. ("My son" is a term of endearment much used in the country.)

"Well, then, it shall be so," said Pitou; "but, zounds! you must be obedient."

"You will see how obedient we shall be," said he, giving a wink to Désiré.

"Only," added Désiré, "you must engage with regard to the muskets —"

"Oh! that is agreed upon," cried Pitou, interrupting him, who was in truth extremely uneasy at the task imposed upon him, but whom, however, ambition was counselling to venture on deeds which required great daring.

"You promise, then?" said Claude.

"You swear it?" said Désiré.

Pitou stretched forth his hand. His two companions did the same.

And thus it was, by the light of the stars, and in an opening of the forest, that the insurrection was declared in the department of the Aisne by the three Haramontese, unwitting plagiarists of William Tell and his three companions.

The fact is, that Pitou dimly foresaw that, after all the perils and troubles he would have to encounter, he would have the happiness of appearing gloriously invested with the insignia of a commander of the National Guard before the eyes of Catherine; and the insignia appeared to him to be of a nature to cause her to feel, if not remorse, at least some regret for the conduct she had pursued.

Thus consecrated by the will of his electors, Pitou returned to his house, meditating on the ways and means by which he could procure arms for his thirty-three National Guards.

CHAPTER LXIV.

IN WHICH WILL BE SEEN OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER THE MONARCHICAL PRINCIPLE REPRESENTED BY THE ABBÉ FORTIER, AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLE REPRESENTED BY PITOU.

THE whole of that night Pitou was so absorbed in reflecting on the great honour which had befallen him that he forgot to visit his wires.

The next morning he donned his helmet, and buckled on his great sabre, and set out manfully towards Villers-Cotterêts.

It was just striking six o'clock when Pitou reached the square before the chateau, and he modestly knocked at the small door which opened into the Abbé Fortier's garden.

Pitou had knocked loud enough to satisfy his conscience, but gently enough not to be heard from the house.

He had hoped thus to gain a quarter of an hour's respite, and during that time to summon up some flowers of oratory wherewith to adorn the speech he had prepared for the Abbé Fortier.

But his astonishment was great, when, notwithstanding his having knocked so gently, he saw the gate at once opened; but his astonishment soon ceased when in the person who had opened it he recognised Sébastien Gilbert.

The lad was walking in the garden studying his lesson by the sun's first rays, or rather, we should say, pretending to study; for the opened book was hanging listlessly in his hand, and the thoughts of the youth were capriciously wandering after those whom he most loved in the world.

Sébastien uttered a joyous cry on perceiving Pitou.

They embraced each other. The boy's first words were these: —

"Have you received news from Paris?"

"No; have you any?" inquired Pitou.

"Oh! I have received some," said Sébastien. "My father has written me a delightful letter."

"Ah!" cried Pitou.

"And in which," continued the lad, "there is a word for you."

And, taking the letter from his breast pocket, he handed it to Pitou.

"P. S.—Billot recommends Pitou not to annoy or distract the attention of the people at the farm."

"Oh!" said Pitou, "that is a recommendation which, as it regards me, is altogether useless. There is no one at the farm whom I can either annoy or amuse."

Then he added to himself, sighing still more deeply, —

"It was to Monsieur Isidor that these words ought to have been addressed."

He however soon recovered his self-possession, and returned the letter to Sébastien.

"Where is the abbé?" he inquired.

Sébastien bent his ear towards the house, and although the width of the courtyard and the garden separated him from the staircase, which creaked beneath the steps of the worthy priest, —

"Why," said he, "he is just coming down stairs."

Pitou went from the garden into the courtyard, and it was only then that he heard the heavy footsteps of the abbé.

The worthy professor was reading the newspaper as he came down stairs. His faithful cat-o'-nine-tails was, as usual, hanging by his side.

With his nose close to the newspaper — for he knew by heart the number of steps, and every inequality in the wall

of his old house — the abbé almost ran against Ange Pitou, who had assumed the most majestic air he could put on, in order to contend with his political antagonist.

But we must first of all say a few words as to the position of the Abbé Fortier, which might have appeared tedious in any other page, but which here find their natural place.

They will explain how it was that the thirty or forty muskets which have been so much talked about happened to be in the Abbé Fortier's charge; which muskets had become the object of the ambition of Pitou and of his two accomplices, Claude and Désiré.

The Abbé Fortier, who had formerly been the almoner or sub-almoner of the chateau, as we have already had occasion to explain elsewhere, had in course of time, and, above all, with that patient fixity of ideas inherent in ecclesiastics, become sole intendant of what in theatrical language is called the *properties* of the chateau.

Besides the sacred vases, besides the library, he had received in charge all the hunting apparatus of the Duke of Orleans, Louis Philippe, the father of Philippe who was afterwards called *Egalité*. Some of this apparatus had been in the family as far back as the reigns of Louis XIII. and Henri III. All these articles had been artistically arranged by him in one of the galleries of the chateau, which had been allotted to him for this express purpose. In order to give them a more picturesque appearance, he had formed them into stars, the centre being shields, surrounded by boar-spears, hunting-knives, and short muskets, richly inlaid, and manufactured during the time of the League.

The door of this gallery was formidably defended by two small cannon of plated bronze, given by Louis XIV. to his brother Monsieur.

Besides these, there were about fifty musketoons, brought as trophies by Joseph Philippe from the battle of Ushant, and presented by him to the municipality of Villers-

Cotterêts; and the municipality, as we have said, having furnished the Abbé Fortier with a house free of rent, had placed these muskets, not knowing what to do with them, in the collegiate house.

Such was the treasure guarded by the dragon named Fortier, and threatened by the Jason named Ange Pitou.

The little arsenal of the chateau was sufficiently celebrated in the country to make people desire to obtain possession of it at little cost.

But, as we have said, the abbé being a vigilant dragon, did not appear disposed willingly to give up to any Jason whatsoever the golden apples which his Hesperides contained.

Having said this much, let us return to Pitou.

He very gracefully bowed to the Abbé Fortier, accompanying his bow with a slight cough, such as we use to attract the attention of persons who are naturally absent or who are preoccupied.

The Abbé Fortier raised his nose from the newspaper.

"Well, I declare," said he, "'t is Pitou."

"To serve you, should I be capable of doing so," courteously replied Ange.

The abbé folded up his newspaper, or rather closed it as he would have done a portfolio, for in those happy days the newspapers were still small pamphlets. Then, having folded up his paper, he stuck it into his belt on the opposite side to his cat-o'-nine-tails.

"Ah! yes; but in that lies the misfortune," replied the abbé, jeeringly, "seeing that you are not capable."

"Oh most worthy abbé."

"Do you hear me, Mr. Hypocrite?"

"Oh good abbé!"

"Do you hear me, Mr. Revolutionist?"

"Come, now, this is good; for before I have spoken even a single word you get into a passion with me. This is but a bad beginning, abbé."

Sébastien — who well knew what the Abbé Fortier had,

for the last two days, been saying to every one who came near him about Pitou, and thinking it better not to be present during the quarrel which must necessarily ensue between his schoolmaster and his friend—stole away as quickly as he could.

Pitou observed Sébastien's escape with a certain degree of sorrow. He was not a very vigorous ally, but he was a youth of the same political communion with himself.

And therefore, when he perceived him stepping through the door, he could not avoid uttering a sigh; then, turning to the abbé, —

"Come, now, Monsieur Fortier," said he, "why do you call me a revolutionist? Would you insinuate that I am the cause of the revolution?"

"You have lived with those who are carrying it on."

"Good Monsieur Abbé," said Pitou, with supreme dignity, "the thoughts of every man are free."

"Ah! indeed."

"*Est penes hominem arbitrium et ratio.*"

"Why, really," cried the abbé, "you know Latin, then, you clown?"

"I know what you taught me of it," modestly replied Pitou.

"Yes, revised, corrected, augmented, and embellished with barbarisms."

"Good again, Monsieur Abbé, — barbarisms! and who is there who does not commit them?"

"Vile fellow!" cried the abbé, evidently wounded by this apparent tendency of Pitou to generalise. "What! do you believe that I am guilty of barbarisms?"

"You would commit them in the eyes of a man who was a better Latin scholar than yourself."

"Only hear that!" cried the abbé, turning pale with anger, and yet struck with the reasoning, which was not devoid of point.

Then, in a melancholy tone, —

"There, in few words, is the system of these vile

wretches; they destroy and degrade, and who profits by it? They know not even themselves, — it is to the profit of the unknown. Come, now, Monsieur Dunce, speak out freely, — do you know any one who is a better Latin scholar than I am?"

"No; but there may be many, although I do not know them, — I do not know everything."

"Zounds! I believe you."

Pitou made the sign of the cross.

"What are you doing there, libertine?"

"You swore, Monsieur Abbé, and I crossed myself."

"Why, rascal, have you come here to tympanise me?"

"To tympanise you!" repeated Pitou.

"Ah! good, — now again you do not comprehend."

"Oh! yes, I understand it well enough. Ah! thanks to you, I know the roots of words: tympanise, *tympanum*, drum; it comes from the Greek *tympanon*, drum, or bell."

The abbé appeared perfectly astounded.

"Root, *typos*, mark, vestige; and, as Lancelot says in his Garden of Greek Roots, *typos*, the form which impresses itself, which word evidently comes from *tupto*, strike. There you have it."

"Ah! ah! rascallion!" cried the abbé, more and more dumfounded. "It seems that you yet know something, even what you did not know."

"Pooh!" ejaculated Pitou, with affected modesty.

"How did it happen that during the whole time you were with me you could not answer me as you have now done?"

"Because, during the time I was with you, Abbé Fortier, you brutalised me, — because by your despotism you repelled my intelligence, imprisoned within my memory all that liberty has since brought forth from it. Yes, liberty," continued Pitou, becoming more energetic as he proceeded; "do you hear me? — liberty!"

"Ah! rascal!"

"Monsieur Professor," said Pitou, with an air which

was not exempt from threat, "Monsieur Professor, do not insult me. *Contumelia non argumentum*, says an orator; insult is not reasoning."

"I think that the fellow," cried the abbé, in great fury, — "I think that the fellow imagines it necessary to translate his Latin to me."

"It is not my Latin, Monsieur Abbé, it is Cicero's, — that is to say, the Latin of a man who assuredly would have thought that you made as many barbarisms in comparison with him as I do in comparison with you."

"You do not pretend, I hope," cried the Abbé Fortier, somewhat shaken on his pedestal, "you do not pretend, I hope, that I should discuss with you?"

"And why not? If from the discussion light is to proceed, *abstrusa in venis silicis*."

"How! how!" exclaimed the Abbé Fortier; "why, really, the fellow has been in the revolutionary school."

"How can that be, since you yourself have said that the revolutionists are fools and ignoramuses?"

"Yes, I do say so."

"Then you are making a false reasoning, my worthy abbé, and your syllogism is badly founded."

"Badly founded! What say you? I have badly founded a syllogism?"

"Undoubtedly, Monsieur l'Abbé. Pitou reasons and speaks well; Pitou has been to the revolutionary school; the revolutionists consequently reason and speak well. There is no getting out of that."

"Animal! brute! simpleton!"

"Do not molest me by your words, Monsieur Abbé. *Objurgatio imbellem animum arguit*, weakness betrays itself by anger."

The abbé shrugged his shoulders.

"Answer me," said Pitou.

"You say that the revolutionists speak well and reason well. But tell me the name of any one of those wretches who knows how to read and write."

"That is blinking the point in discussion; but I will answer you, nevertheless. I can read and write," cried Pitou, with assurance.

"Read, — I will admit that, — and yet I know not; but as to writing —"

"Writing!" cried Pitou.

"Yes, you can write; but without orthography."

"That is to be seen."

"Will you lay a wager that you will write a page under my dictation without making four blunders?"

"Will you lay a wager, you, that you will write half a page under my dictation without making two?"

"Oh! that, for example!"

"Well, let us to work. I will pick you out some participles and reflective verbs. I will season you up all these with a certain number of *thats* which I know of. I accept the wager.

"If I had time," said the abbé.

"You would lose."

"Pitou! Pitou! remember the proverb, *Pitoueus Angelus asinus est.*"

"Pooh! proverbs; there are proverbs made for everybody. Do you know the one which was sung into my ears by the reeds of the Wualu as I passed by them?"

"No; but I should be curious to know it, Master Midas."

"*Fortierus Abbas forte fortis.*"

"Monsieur!" exclaimed the abbé.

"A free translation; the Abbé Fortier is not in his forte every day."

"Fortunately," said the abbé, "accusing is of slight importance; it is the proof that condemns."

"Alas! good Monsieur Abbé, that would be perfectly easy. Let us see, what do you teach your pupils?"

"Why —"

"Allow me to follow up the argument. What do you teach your pupils?"

"Why, what I know."

"Good! — remember that your answer was, 'What I know.'"

"Well, yes, what I know," said the abbé, somewhat shaken; for he felt that during his absence this singular combatant had learnt some unknown thrusts. "Yes, I did say so; and what then?"

"Well, then, since you teach your pupils what you know, tell me what it is that you do know?"

"Latin, French, Greek, history, geography, arithmetic, algebra, astronomy, botany, and numismatics."

"Anything more?" inquired Pitou.

"Why —"

"Try to find something else."

"Drawing."

"Go on."

"Architecture."

"Go on."

"Mechanics."

"A branch of mathematics, — but that matters not; go on."

"But tell me, what are you aiming at?"

"Simply at this: you have stated pretty largely the account of what you do know; now state the account of what you do not know."

The abbé shuddered.

"Ah!" said Pitou, "I clearly see that to do this I must assist you. Well, then, you do not know either German, or Hebrew, or Arabic, or Sanscrit, — four mother languages. I speak not of the subdivisions, which are innumerable. You know nothing of natural history, of chemistry, of physics."

"Monsieur Pitou —"

"Do not interrupt me: you know nothing of rectilinear trigonometry; you are ignorant of medicine; you know nothing of acoustics, of navigation; you are ignorant of everything that regards the gymnastic sciences."

"What say you?"

"I said gymnastics, from the Greek *exercitia gymnastica*, which comes from *gymnos*, naked, because the athletes were naked when they exercised."

"And yet it was I who taught you all this!" cried the abbé, almost consoled at the victory of his pupil.

"That is true."

"It is fortunate that you even acknowledge it."

"And with gratitude. We were saying, then, that you are ignorant of —"

"Enough. It is certain that I am ignorant of much more than I know."

"Therefore you acknowledge that many men know more than you do."

"That is possible."

"It is certain; and the more a man knows, the more does he perceive that he knows nothing. It was Cicero who said this."

"Conclude."

"I conclude."

"Let us hear your conclusion; it will be a fine one."

"I conclude that, in virtue of your relative ignorance, you ought to be more indulgent as to the relative knowledge of other men. This constitutes a double virtue, — a *virtus duplex*, which we are assured was that of Fénelon, who assuredly knew quite as much as you do; and that is the Christian charity of humility."

The abbé uttered a perfect roar of anger.

"Serpent!" he exclaimed, "you are a serpent!"

"You insult me, but do not answer me; this was the reply of one of the seven wise men of Greece. I would say it in Greek, but I have already said it, or something nearly to the same purpose, in Latin."

"Good!" said the abbé, "this is another effect of revolutionary doctrines."

"And in what way?"

"They have persuaded you that you were my equal."

"And even should they have persuaded me of that, it would not give you the right of making a grammatical error."

"What say you?"

"I say that you have just made an enormous fault, master."

"Ah! that is very polite indeed. And what fault did I commit?"

"It is this. You said, 'Revolutionary principles have persuaded you that you were my equal.'"

"Well, and what then?"

"Well, *were* is in the imperfect tense."

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"It was the present you should have used."

"Ah!" cried the abbé, blushing.

"Only translate the phrase into Latin, and you will see what an enormous solecism the verb will give you in the imperfect tense."

"Pitou! Pitou!" exclaimed the abbé, imagining that there was something supernatural in this astounding erudition, — "Pitou! which of the demons is it that inspires you with all these attacks against an old man and against the Church?"

"Why, my good master," replied Pitou, somewhat moved by the tone of despair in which these words were pronounced, "it is not a demon who inspires me, nor do I attack you. Only you treat me as if I were a perfect fool, and you forget that all men are equals."

The abbé was again irritated.

"It is that which I never will permit; I cannot allow such blasphemies to be uttered in my presence. You, — you the equal of a man whom God and study have taken sixty years to form! — Never, never!"

"Well, then, ask Monsieur de Lafayette, who has proclaimed the rights of man."

"Yes, yes, cite as an authority an unfaithful subject of the king, — the torch of all this discord, — the traitor!"

"Hey!" cried Pitou, horrified. "Monsieur de Lafayette

an unfaithful subject! Monsieur de Lafayette a firebrand of discord! Monsieur de Lafayette a traitor! Why, it is you, abbé, who are blaspheming. Why, you must have lived shut up in a box during the last three months. You do not know, then, that this unfaithful subject of the king is the only one who serves the king?—that this torch of discord is the pledge of public peace?—that this traitor is the best of Frenchmen?”

“Oh!” exclaimed the abbé, “could I ever have believed that royal authority would fall so low? A worthless fellow like that”—and he pointed to Pitou—“to invoke the name of Lafayette as in ancient times they invoked the names of Aristides and of Phocion!”

“It is very fortunate for you, Monsieur l’Abbé, that the people do not hear you,” said Pitou, imprudently.

“Ah!” exclaimed the abbé, with triumph, “you at length reveal yourself,—you threaten. The people! yes, the people who basely murdered the king’s officers—the people who even tore out the entrails of their victims! Yes, Monsieur de Lafayette’s people—Monsieur Bailly’s people—Monsieur Pitou’s people! Well, then, why do you not instantly denounce me to the revolutionists of Villers-Cotterêts? Why do you not turn up your sleeves to hang me on the first post? Come now, Pitou, *macte animo*, Pitou! *Sursum! sursum!* Pitou. Come, come, where is your rope? where is your gallows? There is the executioner; *macte animo, generose Pitoue!*”

“*Sic itur ad astra!*” added Pitou, muttering; but solely with the intention of finishing the line, and not perceiving that he was making a pun worthy of a cannibal.

But he was compelled to perceive it by the increased exasperation of the abbé.

“Ah! ah!” vociferated the latter, “ah! that is the way you take it! Ah! it is thus that you would send me to the stars, is it? Ah! you intend me for the gallows, do you?”

“Why, I did not say that,” cried Pitou, beginning to be alarmed at the turn the conversation was taking.

"Ah! you promise me the heaven of the unfortunate Foulon, of the unhappy Berthier?"

"Why so, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"Ah! you have the running-noose prepared, sanguinary executioner! It was you, was it not, who, on the square before the Hôtel de Ville, ascended the lamp-iron, and with your long, hideous, spider-like arms drew the victims to you?"

Pitou uttered a perfect roar of horror and indignation.

"Yes, it was you; and I recognise you," continued the abbé, in a transport of divination which made him resemble Joab, — "I recognise thee! Thou art Catiline!"

"But really," exclaimed Pitou, "do you know that you are saying abominable things to me, Monsieur l'Abbé? Do you know that, in point of fact, you are insulting me?"

"I insult you?"

"Do you know that if this continues I will complain to the National Assembly? Ah! but —"

The abbé laughed with a sinistrously ironical expression.

"Lay your information," said he.

"And that punishment is awarded to ill-disposed persons who insult the good."

"The lamp-post!"

"You are a bad citizen."

"The rope! the rope!"

Then he exclaimed, as if suddenly enlightened and struck with a movement of generous indignation, —

"Ah, the helmet! the helmet! — 't is he!"

"Well," said Pitou, "what is the matter with my helmet?"

"The man who tore out the still smoking heart of Berthier — the cannibal who carried it, still bleeding, and laid it on the table of the electors — wore a helmet; that man with the helmet was you, Pitou! it was you, monster that you are! — avaunt! avaunt! avaunt!"

And each time that the abbé pronounced the word *avaunt*,

which he did with much tragic emphasis, he advanced one step towards Pitou, who retreated in the same proportion.

But, on hearing this accusation, of which the reader knows Pitou to be perfectly innocent, the poor lad threw far from him the helmet of which he was so proud, which rolled over upon the pavement of the courtyard, with the heavy, hollow sound of copper lined with pasteboard.

"You see, wretch!" cried the abbé, "you acknowledge it."

And he assumed the attitude of Lekain,¹ in Orosmanes, at the moment when, after finding the letter, he accuses Zaire.

"Come, now," said Pitou, completely taken aback by so horrible an accusation, "you are exaggerating, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"I exaggerate; that is to say, that you only hanged a little; that is to say, that you only ripped up a little, poor, weak child!"

"Monsieur l'Abbé, you know full well it was not I; you well know that it was Pitt."

"And who is Pitt?"

"Pitt the second, the son of Pitt the first, of Lord Chatham. He who has distributed money, saying, 'Spend it, you need not give any account of it.' If you understood English, I would tell it you in English; but you do not know that language."

"You know it, then, you?"

"Monsieur Gilbert taught it me."

"In three weeks? Miserable impostor!"

Pitou saw that he had made a false step.

"Hear me, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "I will not contend with you any farther. You have your own ideas."

"Really!"

"That is but right."

"You acknowledge that; Monsieur Pitou allows me to have my own ideas! Thanks, Monsieur Pitou!"

¹ A great French tragedian.

"Good! There, you are getting angry again. You must comprehend that if this continues I shall not be able to tell you the object which brought me here."

"Wretch! You had an object in coming here, then? You were deputed, perhaps?"

And the abbé laughed ironically.

"Monsieur," said Pitou, placed by the abbé himself upon the footing in which he wished to find himself since the commencement of the discussion, "you know the great respect I have always had for your character."

"Ah! yes, let us talk of that."

"And the admiration I have always entertained for your knowledge," added Pitou.

"Serpent!" exclaimed the abbé.

"What, I?" cried Pitou. "That for example!"

"Come, now, let us hear what you have to ask of me? That I should take you back here? No, no; I would not spoil my scholars. No; you would still retain the noxious venom; you would infect my young plants: *Infecit pabula tabo.*"

"But, good Monsieur Abbé —"

"No, do not ask me that; if you must absolutely eat, — for I presume that the hangers of Paris eat as well as honest people. They eat, O God! In short, if you require that I should throw you your portion of raw meat, you shall have it. But at the door, on the spatula, as at Rome the masters did to their dogs."

"Monsieur Abbé," cried Pitou, drawing himself up proudly, "I do not ask you for my food; I have wherewith to provide food, God be thanked! I will not be a burden to any one."

"Ah!" exclaimed the abbé, with surprise.

"I live as all living beings do, and that without begging, and by that industry which nature has implanted in me. I live by my own labour; and, more than that, I am so far from being chargeable on my fellow citizens, that several among them have elected me their chief."

"Hey!" cried the abbé, with so much surprise, mingled with so much terror, that it might have been thought that he had trod upon a viper.

"Yes, yes; they have elected me their chief," repeated Pitou, complacently.

"Chief of what?" inquired the abbé.

"Chief of a troop of freemen," said Pitou.

"Ah! good Heaven!" cried the abbé, "the unfortunate boy has gone mad!"

"Chief of the National Guard of Haramont," concluded Pitou, affecting modesty.

The abbé leaned towards Pitou in order to gain from his features a confirmation of his words.

"There is a National Guard at Haramont?" cried he.

"Yes, Monsieur Abbé."

"And you are the chief of it?"

"Yes, Monsieur Abbé."

"You, Pitou?"

"I, Pitou."

The abbé raised his outstretched arms towards heaven, like Phineas, the high priest.

"Abomination of desolation!" murmured he.

"You are not ignorant, Monsieur Abbé," said Pitou, with gentleness, "that the National Guard is an institution destined to protect the life, the liberty, and the property of the citizens."

"Oh! oh!" continued the abbé, overwhelmed by his despair.

"And that," continued Pitou, "too much vigour cannot be given to that institution, above all in the country, on account of the very numerous bands —"

"Bands of which you are the chief!" cried the abbé; "bands of plunderers, bands of incendiaries, bands of assassins!"

"Oh! do not confound things in this manner, dear Monsieur Abbé; you will see my soldiers, I hope, and never were there more honest citizens."

"Be silent! be silent!"

"You must consider, on the contrary, that we are your natural protectors; and the proof of this is that I have come straight to you."

"And for what purpose?" inquired the abbé.

"Ah! that is precisely it," said Pitou, scratching his ear, and looking anxiously at the spot where his helmet was lying, in order to ascertain whether, in going to pick up this very necessary portion of his military equipment, he would not place himself at too great a distance from his line of retreat.

The helmet had rolled to within some few paces only of the great gate which opened on to the Rue de Soissons.

"I asked you for what purpose?" repeated the abbé.

"Well," said Pitou, retreating backwards two steps towards his helmet, "this is the object of my mission, good Monsieur Abbé; permit me to develop it to your sagacity."

"Exordium!" muttered the abbé.

Pitou backed two steps more towards his helmet.

But, by a singular manœuvre, which did not fail to give Pitou some uneasiness, whenever he made two steps nearer to his helmet, the abbé, in order to remain at the same distance from him, advanced two steps towards Pitou.

"Well," said Pitou, beginning to feel more courageous from his proximity to his defensive headpiece, "all soldiers require muskets, and we have not any."

"Ah! you have no muskets!" cried the abbé, dancing with joy. "Ah! they have no muskets! Soldiers without muskets! Ah! by my faith, they must be very pretty soldiers."

"But, Monsieur Abbé," said Pitou, taking again two steps nearer to his helmet, "when men have not muskets they seek for them."

"Yes," said the abbé; "and you are in search of some?"

Pitou was able to reach his helmet, and brought it near him with his foot. Being thus occupied, he did not at once reply to the abbé.

"You look, then, for some?" repeated the latter.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In your house," said Pitou, placing the helmet on his head.

"Guns in my house?" asked the abbé.

"Yes! You have many."

"Ah! my museum! You come to rob my museum. Only fancy the cuirasses of old heroes on the backs of such creatures. Pitou, I told you just now that you were mad. The swords of the Spaniards of Almanza, the pikes of the Swiss of Marignan, were never made for such a troop as yours."

The abbé laughed so scornfully that a cold shudder ran through Pitou's veins.

"No, abbé," said Pitou, "the Spanish swords and Swiss pikes would be of no use."

"It is well you see it."

"Not those arms, abbé, but those capital muskets I cleaned so often when I studied under you. 'Dum me Galatea tenebat,' " added Pitou, with a most insinuating smile.

"Indeed," said the abbé, and he felt his few hairs stand erect as Pitou spoke; "you want my old marine muskets?"

"They are the only weapons you have without any historical interest, and really fit for service."

"Indeed," said the abbé, placing his hand on the handle of his lash, as the soldier would have seized his sword.

"Back! now the traitor unveils himself."

"Abbé," said Pitou, passing from menace to prayer, "give me thirty muskets —"

"Go back!" The abbé advanced towards Pitou.

"And you will have the glory of having contributed to rescue the country from its oppressors."

"Furnish arms to be used against me and mine! Never!" said the abbé.

He took up his lash, —

"Never! never!"

He wheeled it above his head.

"Monsieur," said Pitou, "your name shall be placed in the journal of Monsieur Prudhomme."

"My name in his paper?"

"Honourably mentioned."

"I had rather be sent to the galleys."

"What! you refuse?" asked Pitou.

"Yes; and tell you to go —"

The abbé pointed to the door.

"That would be very wrong, for you would be accused of treason. Monsieur, I beg you not to expose yourself to that."

"Make me a martyr, Nero! I ask but that." And his eye glared so that he looked more like the executioner than the victim.

So Pitou thought, for he began to fall back.

"Abbé," said he, stepping back, "I'm an ambassador of peace, a quiet deputy."

"You come to rob my armoury, as your accomplices did that of the Invalides."

"Which was most laudable," said Pitou.

"And which will here expose you to the risk of the end of my lash."

"Monsieur," said Pitou, who recognised an old acquaintance in the tool, "you will not thus violate the law of nations."

"You will see."

"I am protected by my character of ambassador."

The abbé continued to advance.

"Abbé! abbé! abbé!" said Pitou.

He was at the street door, face to face with his dangerous enemy, and Pitou had either to fight or run.

To run he had to open the door; to open the door, to turn.

If he turned, Pitou exposed to danger the part of his body the least protected by the cuirass.

"You want my guns? you want my guns?" said the abbé, "and say, 'I will have them or you die!'"

"On the contrary, monsieur, I say nothing of the kind."

"Well, you know where they are. Cut my throat and take them."

"I am incapable of such a deed."

Pitou stood at the door with his hand on the latch, and thought, not of the abbé's muskets, but of his lash.

"Then you will not give me the muskets?"

"No!"

"I ask you again?"

"No! no!"

"Again?"

"No! no!"

"Then keep them!" and he dashed through the half-open door.

His movement was not quick enough to avoid the lash, which hissed through the air and fell on the small of the back of Pitou, and, great as was the courage of the conqueror of the Bastille, he uttered a cry of pain.

Just then many of the neighbours rushed out, and to their surprise saw Pitou running away with his sword and helmet, and the Abbé Fortier at the door brandishing his lash, as the angel of destruction wields his sword of flame.

CHAPTER LXV.

PITOU A DIPLOMATIST.

WE have seen how Pitou was disappointed.

The fall was immense. Not even Satan had fallen from such an eminence when from heaven he was thrown to hell. Satan fell, but remained a king, while the Abbé Fortier's victim was only Ange Pitou.

How could he appear before the persons who had sent him? How, after having testified such rash confidence, could he say that he was a boaster and a coward, who, armed with a sword and a helmet, had suffered an old abbé to put him to flight.

Pitou was wrong in having boasted that he would triumph over the Abbé Fortier, and in failing.

The first time he found himself out of view, he put his hand on his head and thought.

He had expected to annihilate Fortier with his Latin and Greek; he thought that by kind words he would soften the old Cerberus, but he had been bitten, and all had been spoiled.

The abbé had great self-esteem, and Pitou had relied on it. What most offended the abbé was Pitou's finding fault with his French,—a thing he cared more about than he did about the muskets which he had sought to take from him.

Young people, when good, always think others as good as they are themselves.

The abbé was not only an outrageous royalist, but also an outrageous philologist.

Pitou was especially sorry that that had excited him, both on account of Louis XVI. and the verb *to be*. He knew and should have managed his friend. That was his error, and he regretted it, though too late.

What should he have done?

By eloquence have flattered the abbé of his own royalism, and not have noticed his mistakes in grammar.

He should have convinced him that the National Guard of Haramont was opposed to the Revolution.

He should have said that it would sustain the king.

Above all, he never should have said a word about the verb *to be*.

There was no earthly doubt that the abbé would have opened his arsenal for the purpose of securing to the cause of the king such a leader and such a company.

This falsehood is diplomacy. Pitou thought over all the stories of old times.

He thought of Philip of Macedon, who swore falsely so often, but who was called a great man.

Of Brutus, who, to overcome his enemies, pretended to be a fool, but who is thought a great man.

Of Themistocles, who deceived his fellow citizens, but who is called a great man.

On the other hand, he remembered that Aristides would admit of no injustice, and that he too was esteemed a great man.

This contrast annoyed him.

He thought, though, that Aristides fortunately lived at a time when the Persians were so stupid that one could act honestly and yet conquer them.

He then remembered that Aristides had been exiled, and that this circumstance acted in favour of the King of Macedon. He rather approved of Philip, Brutus, and Themistocles.

Descending into modern times, Pitou remembered how Gilbert, Bailly, Lameth, Barnave, and Mirabeau would have acted had Louis XVI. been the abbé, and they been Pitou.

What would they not have done to have armed the five hundred thousand National Guards of France?

Exactly what Pitou had not done.

They would have persuaded Louis XVI. that they desired nothing more than to preserve the Father of the French; that to save him from three to five hundred thousand guns were needed.

Mirabeau would have succeeded.

Pitou then remembered the two flowing lines, —

“ When you to the Devil pray,
Call him the Giver of good.”

He came to the conclusion that Ange Pitou was a perfect brute, and that to return to his electors with any glory he would have to do exactly what he had not.

Pitou determined then, either by force or by tricks, to get possession of the arms.

The first means were tricks.

He could enter the abbé's museum and steal the arms.

If he did it alone, the act would be theft. If with companions, it would be simply a removal.

The very word *theft* made Pitou uneasy.

There were yet in France people enough used to the old laws to call the removal highway robbery.

Pitou hesitated.

But Pitou's self-love was excited, and to save it he was forced to act alone.

He set to work most diligently to seek some mode of extricating himself.

At last, like Archimedes, he shouted, “Eureka!” that is to say, “I have found it!”

The following was his plan: —

Lafayette was Commander in Chief of the National Guards of France.

Haramont was in France.

Haramont had a National Guard.

Lafayette then was Commander of the National Guard of Haramont.

He could not, therefore, consent that they should be destitute while the rest of France was armed.

To reach Lafayette he had to appeal to Gilbert,—to reach Gilbert, Billot.

Pitou had then to write to Billot.

As Billot could not read, he in the first place wrote to Gilbert, thus saving the necessity of at least one letter.

Before he did so he went secretly to Haramont, not however without being seen by Tellier and Maniquet.

They withdrew in silence, and each with a finger on his lips as a token of silence.

Pitou had entered on the prosecution of a full course of politics.

The following is a copy of the letter which produced such an effect on Tellier and Maniquet:—

“DEAR AND HONOURABLE MONSIEUR BILLOT, — The revolutionary cause in our part of the country every day gains.

“The commune of Haramont has enrolled itself in the active National Guard.

“It is, however, unarmed.

“Arms may be procured. Certain persons have large quantities, the possession of which would prevent the expenditure of public money.

“If General Lafayette be pleased to order these to be seized and distributed, I will myself assure thirty muskets can be placed in the arsenals of Haramont.

“It is the only way to oppose the anti-revolutionary action of the aristocrats, who are enemies of the nation.

“Your fellow citizen and servant,

“ANGE PITOU.”

When this was done, he remembered that he had forgotten to speak of the farmer's wife and family.

On the other hand, he was too much of a Brutus to tell Billot about Catherine. He however opened his letter and wrote with a sigh this postscript:—

“P. S. — Mademoiselle Catherine and all are well, and send their love to Monsieur Billot.”

He thus compromised neither himself nor any one.

He sent the letter, and the answer soon came.

On the next day a mounted express reached Haramont, and asked for Monsieur Ange Pitou.

All the members of the militia were on the *qui vive*.

The horse was white with foam, and the rider wore the uniform of the Parisian National Guard.

From the excitement he produced all may fancy how great was Pitou's agitation.

He approached, and, not without trembling, received the package which the officer gave him.

It was the reply of Billot, written by Gilbert.

He advised Pitou to be both moderate and patriotic.

He enclosed an order of Lafayette, countersigned by the Minister of War, for the National Guard of Haramont to arm itself.

The order was thus written:—

“The possessors of muskets and sabres in a greater number than one will be required to place them in the hands of the commanders of the National Guards of the commune.

“The present order extends to all the province.”

Pitou thanked the officer, and saw him at once set out.

Pitou had reached the acme of glory, having received a message directly from Lafayette.

This message suited his ideas exactly.

To describe Pitou's impressions would be impossible, and we will not therefore attempt to do so. The sight, however, of the excited countenances of all the people, the great respect exhibited to him, would have made all think Pitou a most important personage.

All the electors requested to see and touch the ministerial seal, a favour Pitou kindly granted.

When none but the initiated remained, Pitou said:—

“Citizens, my plans succeeded. I wrote to General Lafayette, who wished to form a National Guard, and had selected me as commander.

"Read the direction of this letter."
The despatch had been directed:—

"CITIZEN ANGE PITOU,
"Commander of the National Guard of Haramont."

"I am then recognised in my rank by Lafayette, as commander. You are recognised as Guards."

A loud shout was raised.

"I know where we can get arms," said Pitou.

"You will at once appoint a lieutenant and a sergeant. Those two functionaries will accompany me."

All present seemed to hesitate.

"What is your opinion, Pitou?" said Maniquet.

"The matter does not concern me. Meet alone and appoint the two functionaries. But appoint capable ones."

Pitou bade adieu to his soldiers, and remained in a state of solemn grandeur.

He thus remained in his glory, while the soldiers discussed the details of the military power which was to restrain Haramont.

The election lasted an hour. The lieutenant and sergeant chosen were Tellier and Maniquet, the last of whom was the subaltern. They returned, and announced the fact to Pitou.

He then said, "Now there is no time to lose."

"Yes," said an enthusiast, "let us begin the manual."

"Wait a moment; let us get guns first."

"True."

"But can we not practise with sticks?"

"Let us be military," said Pitou, who watched the military order with anxiety, but who did not feel himself qualified to teach an art of which he was utterly ignorant.

"It is a difficult matter to teach a raw recruit how to shoot with a stick. Let us not be ridiculous."

"True. We must have muskets."

"Come with me, then, lieutenant and sergeant. The rest of you wait here."

All acquiesced respectfully.

"We have six hours' daylight yet left. That is more time than is needed to go to Villers-Cotterêts."

"Forward!" said Pitou.

The staff of the army of Haramont set off.

When Pitou, however, read again the letter he had received, he discovered that he had overlooked one passage:—

"Why did Pitou forget to give Dr. Gilbert some information about Sébastien?"

"Why does not Sébastien write to his father?"

CHAPTER LXVI.

PITOU TRIUMPHS.

THE Abbé Fortier was far from suspecting what danger he was in, prepared carefully for him by deep diplomacy. He had no idea of Pitou's influence.

He was seeking to prove to Sébastien that bad company is the ruin of innocence; that Paris is a pit of perdition; that even angels would be corrupted there, like those who went astray at Gomorrah; and, seriously impressed by Pitou's visit, besought Sébastien always to remember to be a good and true royalist.

By these words the abbé meant a very different thing from what Doctor Gilbert meant.

He forgot that, as long as this difference existed, he was committing a very bad action, for he sought to excite the son's opinions against the father.

He met, to tell the fact, with no great difficulty.

Strange to say, at a period when the minds of most children are, so to say, mere potter's clay, on which every pressure leaves a mark, Sébastien in fixity of purpose was a man.

Was that to be attributed to that aristocratic nature which disdains everything plebeian?

Or was it plebeianism pushed to stoicism?

The mystery was too deep for the Abbé Fortier. He knew the doctor was an enthusiastic patriot, and, with the simplicity of mind peculiar to ecclesiastics, sought for the glory of God to reform the son.

Though Sébastien appeared to listen, he did not, but was musing on those strange visions which previously had

taken possession of him under the tall trees of the park of Villers-Cotterêts, when the abbé took his pupils thither, and which had become, so to say, a kind of second life, so closely, however, allied to the natural existence that in our prosaic days it would seem impossible.

All at once a loud knock was heard at the door in the Rue de Soissons, and it immediately opened and admitted several persons.

They were the maire, adjunct, and town clerk.

Behind them were the gendarmes, after whom came several curious persons.

The abbé went at once to the maire, and said, —

“Monsieur Longpré, what is the matter?”

“Abbé, are you aware of the new order of the Minister of War?”

“I am not.”

“Be pleased to read this.”

As he read it, he grew pale.

“Well!” said he.

“Well, the gendarmes of Haramont expect you to surrender your arms.”

The abbé sprang forward as if he would devour the National Guard.

Pitou thought it time for himself to come forward, with his lieutenant and sergeant.

“Here are the gentlemen,” said the maire.

The abbé’s face was flushed.

“What! these vagabonds!”

The maire was a good-natured man, and as yet had no decided political opinions. He had no disposition to quarrel either with the Church or the National Guard.

The words of the abbé excited a loud laugh, and he said to Pitou, —

“Do you hear how he speaks of your command?”

“Because the abbé knew us when children, he fancies we can never grow old.”

“The children, however, have now grown,” said Maniquet, reaching forth his mutilated hand to the men.

"And are serpents," cried the enraged abbé.

"Who will bite if they be trampled on," rejoined Maniquet.

In these threats the maire saw all the future revolution, and the abbé martyrdom.

"A portion of your arms are needed," said the maire, who sought to effect a reconciliation.

"They are not mine," said the abbé.

"Whose are they?"

"They belong to the Duke of Orleans."

"Well, that matters not," said Pitou.

"How so?" said the abbé.

"We would ask for them."

"I will write to the duke," said the abbé, majestically.

"The abbé forgets that, if the duke were written to, he would reply, that not only the weapons of his English enemies, but those of his grandfather, Louis XIV., must be surrendered to patriots."

The abbé knew this was true: —

"Circumdedisti me hostibus meis."

"True, abbé; but to your purely political enemies. We hate in you only the bad patriot."

"Fool!" said Fortier, with an excitement which inspired him with a certain kind of eloquence, — "fool, and dangerous fool! which is the patriot? I, who would keep these arms, or you, who would use them in rapine and war? Which is the better? I, who cultivate the olive of peace, or you, who would lacerate the bosom of France, our common mother, with war?"

The maire sought to conceal his emotion, and nodded to the abbé, as if to say, —

"Good."

The adjunct, like Tarquin, cut down flowers with his cane.

Pitou was nonplussed.

The two subalterns saw it, and were surprised.

Sébastien alone was cool.

He approached Pitou and said, —

"Well, what is to be done, Pitou?"

Pitou told him in few words.

"Is the order signed?" inquired Sébastien.

"The order is signed," and showed the minister's, his father's, and Lafayette's signatures.

"Why, then, do you hesitate?"

His flashing eye, his erect form, showed clearly the two indomitable races from which he sprang.

The abbé heard his words, shuddered, and said, —

"Three generations oppose you."

"Abbé," said the maire, "the order must be obeyed."

The abbé put his hand on the keys which were in the girdle that from monastic habit he yet wore, and said, —

"Never! they are not mine, and I will not surrender them till my master orders me."

"Abbé! abbé!" said the maire, who felt compelled to disapprove.

"This is rebellion," said Sébastien. "Master, be careful."

"*Tu quoque*," said the abbé, like Cæsar folding his robe over his bosom.

"Be at ease, abbé," said Pitou, "these arms will be in good hands for France."

"Hush, Judas, you have betrayed your master. Why will you not betray your country?"

Pitou felt his conscience prick him. What he had done was not at the instinct of a noble heart, though he had acted bravely.

He looked around, and saw his two subalterns apparently ashamed of his weakness.

Pitou felt that he was in danger of losing his influence.

Pride came to the aid of this champion of the Revolution.

He looked up and said, —

"Abbé, submissive as I was to my old master, not un-replied to shall such comments be made."

"Ah, you are going to reply," said the Abbé Fortier.

"Yes; and tell me if I am not right. You call me

traitor, and refuse me the arms I asked you kindly for, but which I now take in the name, and by the strong hand, of the law. Well, abbé, I had rather be called traitor to my master than, like you, have opposed the liberty of my country. Our country forever!"

The maire nodded to Pitou, as he previously had to the abbé.

The effect of this address ruined the abbé.

The maire disapproved.

So, too, would the adjunct, but the absence of the two chiefs would certainly have caused remark.

He then, with the gendarmes and Pitou, who was perfectly familiar with the locality in which he had grown up, proceeded to the museum.

Sébastien rushed after the patriots; the other pupils appeared amazed.

After the door was opened the abbé sank, half dead with mortification and rage, on the first chair.

When once in the museum, Pitou's assistants wished to pillage everything, but the honesty of the commandant restrained them.

He took only thirty-three muskets, for he commanded thirty-three National Guards.

As it might be necessary for him some day to fire a shot, he took, as a thirty-fourth, an officer's gun, lighter and shorter than the others, with which he could kill either a false Frenchman or a true Prussian.

He then selected a straight sword like Lafayette's, which had perhaps been borne by some hero at Foutenoy or Philipsbourg. He buckled it on.

Each of his colleagues then placed twelve muskets on his shoulder, and were so delighted that they scarcely felt the enormous weight.

Pitou took the rest.

They passed through the park, to avoid observation in going through Villers-Cotterêts.

It was also the shortest route.

Our three heroes, loaded with their spoils, passed rapidly through the park and reached the rendezvous. Exhausted and heated, they took their precious prize that night to Pitou's house. It may be the country had been too hasty in confiding it to them.

There was a meeting of the guard that night, and Pitou gave them the muskets, saying, in the words of the Spartan mothers when they gave their sons their shields, —

“With them, or on them.”

Thus was the little commune, by the genius of Pitou, made to seem busy as an ant-hill during an earthquake.

Delight at possessing a gun among a people smugglers by nature, whom the long oppression of gamekeepers had incensed, could not but be great. Pitou consequently became a god on earth. His long legs and arms were forgotten. So too were his clumsy knees and his grotesque antecedents. He could not but be the tutelary god of the country.

The next day was passed by the enthusiasts in cleaning and repairing their arms. Some rejoiced that the cock worked well, and others repaired the springs of the lock or replaced the screws.

In the mean time Pitou had retired to his room, as Agamemnon did to his tent, brightening his brains as others did their guns.

What was Pitou thinking of?

Pitou, become a leader of the people, was thinking of the hollowness of earthly grandeur.

The time had come when the whole edifice he had erected was about to crumble.

The guns had been issued on the evening before, and the day passed in putting them in order. On the next day he would have to drill his men, and Pitou did not know a single command of the manual.

What is the use of a commandant ignorant of the drill? The writer of these lines never knew but one so ignorant. He was, however, a countryman of Pitou's.

Pitou thought with his head in his hands and his body prostrate.

Cæsar amid the thickets of Gaul, Hannibal wandering on the Alps, and Columbus drifting over the ocean, never thought more deeply, and never so fully confessed themselves *Diis ignotis*, the fearful powers who hold the secrets of life and death, than did Pitou.

"Come," said Pitou, "time speeds, and to-morrow I must appear in all my insignificance.

"To-morrow the captor of the Bastille, the god of war, will be called by all Haramont an idiot, — as I do not know who was by the Greeks.

"To-day I triumph, but to-morrow I shall be hooted.

"This cannot be. Catherine will know it, and will think me disgraced."

Pitou paused.

"What will extricate me from this dilemma?

"Audacity.

"Not so; audacity lasts a second. The Prussian manual has twelve movements.

"Strange idea, to teach the Prussian drill to Frenchmen. I am too much of a patriot to teach Frenchmen any of their inventions. I will make a national drill.

"But I may go astray.

"I saw a monkey once go through the manual at a fair. He probably, though, being a monkey, had never served.

"Ah! I have an idea."

He began to stride as fast as his long legs would permit, but was suddenly brought to a stand by the idea.

"My disappearance will astonish my men. I must inform them."

He then sent for his subalterns, and said, —

"Tell the men that the first drill will take place on the day after to-morrow."

"Why not to-morrow?"

"You are fatigued, and before drilling the men I must instruct the officers. Be careful, too, I beg you, to do as I do, and to say nothing."

They saluted him *à la militaire*.

"Very well; the drill will be at half-past four on the day after to-morrow."

The subalterns left, and as it was half after nine, went to bed.

Pitou let them go, and when they had turned the corner, went in an opposite direction, and soon was hidden in the thickest of the park.

Now let us see what Pitou was thinking of.

CHAPTER LXVII.

HOW PITOU LEARNED TACTICS, AND ACQUIRED A NOBLE BEARING.

PITOU hurried on for half an hour into the very depth of the wood.

There was in the undergrowth, beneath a huge rock, a hut built some thirty-five or forty years before, which was inhabited by a person who in his day had excited no little mystery.

This hut, half buried in the ground, and surrounded by foliage, received light only by an oblique opening. Not unlike a gipsy hut, it was often to be detected only by the smoke which rose from it.

None but gamekeepers, smugglers, and sportsmen would ever have suspected its existence, or that it was inhabited.

For forty years, though, it had been the abode of a retired keeper whom the Duke of Orleans, father of Louis Philippe, had permitted to remain, with the privilege of killing a rabbit or a hare a day.

Fowl and large game were excepted.

At the time we speak of the old man was sixty-nine years old. His name was Clovis originally, to which, as he grew old, the title Father was annexed.

From his residence the rock took the name of Clovis's Stone.

He had been wounded at Fontenoy, and had lost a leg, and had consequently been treated kindly and obtained many privileges from the duke.

He never went into great cities, and visited Villers-Cotterêts but once a year for the purpose of buying three

hundred and sixty-five loads of powder and ball. On leap years he bought three hundred and sixty-six.

On that day he took to the hatter, Monsieur Cornu, three hundred and sixty-five or three hundred and sixty-six rabbit and hare skins, for which he received seventy-five Tours francs. He never missed a shot, and we are therefore able to be so exact.

He lived on the flesh of the animals, though sometimes he sold it.

With the skins of the animals he bought powder and lead.

Once a year Father Clovis entered into a kind of speculation.

The rock which supported his hut formed an inclined plane, and measured eighteen feet in the widest part, so that any object placed at the top would slide gently to the bottom.

He quietly went through the neighbouring villages, and, through the intervention of the old women who bought his hares and rabbits, reported that all the young women who on the day of Saint Louis should slide from the top to the bottom of his rock would be married within the year.

The first year many young women came, but none dared the attempt.

The next year three tried it. Two were married during the course of the year, and Father Clovis said the third would have been married had she been as brave as the others were.

The year after all dared the attempt.

Father Clovis declared that enough men could not be found for so many young women, but that the boldest would be married. He had brilliant success.

For thirty-five years Clovis lived in this manner. The country treated him as the Arabs do their marabouts. He became a legend.

One thing, however, excited the jealousy of the guards

on duty. It was said that Father Clovis had fired but three hundred and sixty-five times, but had killed the same number of hares.

More than once the nobles of Paris, invited by the Duke of Orleans, who had heard of Father Clovis, placed a louis or a crown in his broad hand, and sought to ascertain how any one could never miss.

Old Clovis, however, told them nothing more than that with the same gun he never missed a man at a hundred yards. If he could kill a man, it was far easier to kill a hare.

If any smiled when Clovis spoke thus, he used to say, —
“Why do you fire when you are not sure of the mark?” — a question worthy of Monsieur de La Palisse but for the singular accuracy of the marksman.

“But why did Monsieur d’Orleans, who is not at all mean, grant you permission to fire but once a day?”

“Because he knew that one shot would be enough.”

The curiosity of this spectacle, and the oddness of this theory, brought at least ten louis a day to the old anchorite.

Now, as he gained much money by the sale of his hare-skins and the holiday he had established, and he purchased only a pair of gaiters in every five years and a coat every ten, he was not at all unhappy.

On the contrary, it was said that he had a concealed treasure, and that his heir would get a good thing. Such was the singular person whom Pitou went to at midnight when the brilliant idea of which we have spoken entered his mind.

To fall in with Father Clovis, however, required much address.

Like one of Neptune’s old herdsmen, he was not easily overtaken. He knew easily how to distinguish the useless man from one from whom he could make money.

Clovis was lying down on his bed of straw, made of the aromatic plants which the woods produce in September, and which would not require to be changed until the same month of the next year.

It was about eleven o'clock, and the weather was calm and bright.

To reach the hut of Clovis, he had to pass through the thickets of oak and underbrush so thick that his arrival could not be unknown.

Pitou made four times as much noise as an ordinary person would have done, and old Clovis lifted up his head. He was not asleep, but was on that day in a terribly bad humour. An accident had happened which made him almost unapproachable. The accident was terrible.

His gun, which he had used for five years with balls, and for thirty-five years with shot, had burst.

For thirty-five years he had not missed a shot.

The fact of the hare being safe and sound was not the greatest misfortune which had befallen Clovis. Two fingers of his right hand had been carried away. Clovis had bound up his fingers with bruised herbs.

Now, to procure another gun Father Clovis was under the necessity of appealing to his treasury, and even though he expended as much as two louis, who knew if the gun would not burst at the second shot?

Pitou came at an evil hour.

At the very moment Pitou placed his hand on the door, old Clovis uttered a groan which amazed the commander of the National Guard of Haramont.

Was it a wolf or some one substituted for Father Clovis?

Pitou hesitated whether he should go in or not.

"Well, Father Clovis."

"What?" said the misanthrope.

Pitou was reassured; he recognised the voice of the anchorite.

"Ah! you are in," said he.

He then entered the hut, and bowed to the occupant.

Pitou said, as he entered the room, quietly, —

"Good-morning, Clovis."

"Who goes there?" said the proprietor.

"I."

"Who are you?"

"I, Pitou."

"Who is Pitou?"

"Ange Pitou, of Haramont."

"Well, what is it to me who you are?"

"Ah!" said Pitou, "Clovis is now in a bad humour. I was sorry to awake him."

"Certainly you were."

"What then must I do?"

"Go away as quickly as you possibly can."

"But let us talk."

"About what?"

"Of a favour you can do me."

"I want pay for all I do."

"Well, I will pay for all I get."

"Possibly; but I am no longer of use to any one."

"How so?"

"I shall kill no more game."

"How so? You never miss a shot, Clovis. It is impossible."

"Go away, I tell you."

"But, Father Clovis—"

"You annoy me."

"Listen to me, and you will not be sorry."

"Well, then,—what do you wish? Be brief."

"You are an old soldier?"

"Well?"

"Well, I wish—"

"Go on!"

"Teach me the manual."

"Are you a fool?"

"No; teach me the manual, and I will pay you."

"The creature is mad," said Clovis—"what! a soldier?"

"Father Clovis, will you teach me the manual or not? Do so, and I will pay you what you please."

The old man arose, and said,—

"What I please. Well, give me a gun."

"Bah! I have thirty-four guns!"

"Thirty-four?"

"Yes, I have thirty-five. It is a sergeant's musket — the last, I mean — with the king's cipher on the breech."

"How came you by it? You did not steal it, I hope."

Pitou told him the whole truth, frankly and honestly.

"Well, I will teach you; but my fingers are hurt."

He then told Pitou what accident had befallen him.

"Well," said Pitou, "I will give you another gun. I cannot give you other fingers, for all I have I need myself."

He arose.

The full moon poured a flood of white light on the little opening in front of the hut, as Pitou and Father Clovis went out.

Any one who had seen these two dark forms gesticulating at midnight could not have repressed some mysterious terror.

Clovis took up his bursted gun with a sigh. He then placed himself in a military position.

It was strange to see the old man again become erect, bent as he was from the habit of passing the bushes; but the recollection of his regiment, his aiguillet, revived him, and he brushed back his dark hair.

"Look at me," said he, "look at me! That is the way to learn. Do as I do, and I will correct you."

Pitou made the attempt.

"Draw back your knees. Square your shoulders. Give full play to your head. Give yourself a good foundation; your feet are large enough."

Pitou did as well as he could.

"Very well!" said the old man. "You look noble enough."

If he looked thus after an hour's drill, what would he not be in a month? He would be majestic.

He wished to continue.

Father Clovis, however, wished to get hold of the gun first, and said, —

"No, this is enough for once. Teach this at your first drill, and they will not learn it in four days. I must, however, tell you that there will be no moon."

"We will go through the manual in your house, then."

"You will have to bring a light."

"And whatever else you want."

"Then bring my gun."

"You shall have it to-morrow."

"Very well. Now let me see if you recollect what I told you."

Pitou behaved so well that Clovis complimented him. He would have promised Clovis a six-pounder if he had asked for one.

When they had finished, it lacked but an hour of daylight, and he took leave of his teacher, going, it must be owned, slowly towards Haramont, the whole population of which slept soundly.

Pitou sank to sleep, and dreamed that he commanded an army of many millions of men, and waged war on the whole world, his army obeying in one rank the word of command, "Carry arms."

On the next day he drilled his soldiers with an insolence which they esteemed proof positive of his capacity.

Pitou became popular, and was admired by men, women, and children.

The women even became serious, when, in stentorian tones, he cried out, —

"Be a soldier! look at me!"

He was a soldier.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

CATHERINE BECOMES A DIPLOMATIST.

FATHER CLOVIS had his gun; for what Pitou promised to do, he did.

In two visits, Pitou became a grenadier. But unfortunately, when Clovis had taught him the manual he had taught all he knew.

Pitou bought a copy of the "French Tactician," and of the "Manual of the National Guard," in which he expended a crown.

The Haramont battalion made, thanks to Pitou, very rapid progress. When he had reached the more complicated manœuvres, he went to Soissons, where in one hour, from observing real soldiers drilled by real officers, he learned in one day more than his books would have taught him in a month. He thus toiled for two months.

Pitou was ambitious and in love. Pitou was unfortunate in his love. Often after his drill, which always followed midnight study, had Pitou crossed the plains of Lagny, and now and then the whole forest, to meet Catherine, who always kept her appointment at Boursonne.

Catherine used every day to steal away from her household duty to a little cot near the warren of the Château de Boursonne, to meet her beloved Isidor, who seemed always happy and joyous, even though everything around seemed dark.

How great was Pitou's unhappiness when he remembered how unequal a share of happiness was vouchsafed to different men!

He to whom the girls of Haramont, Taillefontaine, and

Vivières made love, who also had his rendezvous, was yet forced to weep like a child before a door open to Isidor.

Pitou loved Catherine the more devotedly because he saw that she was his superior. He also knew that she loved another, and though he ceased to be jealous of Isidor, who was noble, handsome, and worthy of love, Catherine at least, sprung from the people, should not disgrace her family nor make him unhappy.

When he thought, therefore, he suffered very deeply.

"It was heartless," said he, "to suffer me to go. When I did so, she never asked if I was dead or alive. What would Billot say if he knew his friends were treated thus, and his business thus neglected? What would he say if he knew that the housekeeper, instead of attending to his business, was making love with the aristocratic Monsieur Charny?"

"He would say nothing, but kill Catherine.

"It is something, however, to have such a revenge in my grasp."

It was better, though, not to make use of it.

Pitou had observed that good actions, not understood, never benefit the actors.

Would it not be well to let Catherine know what he was about? Nothing was easier; he had only to speak to her Sunday at the dance, and let fall something to inform her that three persons knew her secret. Was it not worth while to make her suffer a little, to quell her pride?

If, though, he went to the dance, he must appear as the equal of the noble, — a thing difficult to do when the object of comparison was one so well dressed.

The pavilion in which Catherine used to meet Charny was in a kind of grove which was an appendant to the forest of Villers-Cotterêts.

A simple ditch divided the property of the count from that of his neighbours.

Catherine, who was every day called, for one reason or another, to visit the neighbours, found no difficulty in

leaping over this ditch. The rendezvous was certainly well selected.

The pavilion was so placed that through the loopholes, set with painted glass, she could overlook the whole grove, while it was itself so secluded that no one could see it, and three springs of a horse would put any one who sought to leave in the forest or in neutral ground.

Pitou had watched Catherine so carefully that he knew whither she went, and whence she came, as well as the poacher knows the track of the hare.

Catherine did not return to the forest with Isidor, who used always to remain some time in the pavilion in order to see that she was not annoyed, and used then to go in a contrary direction.

Pitou hid himself on Catherine's pathway, and ascended an immense tree which completely overlooked the pavilion.

Before an hour had passed he saw Catherine come by. She tied her horse in the wood, sprang over the ditch, and went to the pavilion.

She dismounted just below the tree where Pitou was.

He had only to descend and lean against the trunk. He then took from his pocket the "Manual of the National Guard," and began to read.

An hour after, Pitou heard a door open. He heard the rustling of a silk dress, and saw Catherine look anxiously around, as if to see if she was watched.

She stood within ten paces of Pitou.

Pitou did not move, and kept his book on his knees. He no longer, however, pretended to read, and looked at Catherine so that she could not misunderstand him.

She uttered a half-stifled cry, and then became pale as death. After another brief moment of indecision, she rushed into the forest and became invisible.

Pitou had arranged matters well, and Catherine was caught in the snare.

Pitou returned half happy and half afraid to Haramont.

As soon as he thought of what he had done, he saw that

it might have many consequences which previously had not suggested themselves to him.

The following Sunday was appointed for a military parade.

Being sufficiently instructed in their own opinion, the National Guards had requested to be assembled in the presence of the public.

A few neighbouring villages, excited by rivalry, who had also paid attention to tactics, were to come to Haramont for a kind of contest.

A deputation from each of these villages was present under the command of an old sergeant.

The announcement of such a spectacle brought many persons together, and the parade ground of Haramont early in the day was occupied by crowds of young children, and at a later hour by the fathers and mothers of the champions.

Four drums beat in four different directions, — that of Largny, Vez, Taillefontaine, and Vivières.

Haramont was a centre, and had its four cardinal points.

A fifth replied; it preceded the thirty-three National Guards of Haramont.

Among the spectators was a portion of the aristocracy and of the bourgeoisie of Villers-Cotterêts come to be amused.

There were also many farmers who had come to see.

Soon Catherine and Madame Billot came. Just at this moment the National Guard of Haramont came from the village, headed by Pitou, a drum, and a fife. Pitou was on a great white horse which Maniquet had lent him for the purpose of making a representation of the Marquis de Lafayette *ad vivum* at Haramont.

Pitou grasped his sword and bestrode the huge horse. If he did not represent the aristocracy, he at least represented the bone and sinew of the land.

The entrance of Pitou, and of those who had conferred so much honour on the province, was saluted by loud acclamations.

All had hats alike, with the national cockade, and marched in two ranks in the most perfect order.

When they reached the parade, all approved of them.

Pitou caught a glance of Catherine and grew pale. She trembled.

This was the most exciting portion of the review.

He put his men through the manual, and every command excited much attention and applause.

The other villagers appeared excited and irregular. Some were half armed, others half instructed, and were completely demoralised by the comparison, and others became vain of their excellence.

Both were uncertain, however, as to cause and effect.

From the manual, they passed to the drill.

Here the sergeant expected to rival Pitou.

In consideration of age, the sergeant had received the command, and marched his men to and fro by files.

He could do nothing more.

Pitou, with his sword under his arm, and his helmet on his brow, looked on with infinite superiority.

When the sergeant saw his heads of column become lost amid the trees, while the rear took the back track to Haramont, — when he saw his squares disperse, and squads and platoons lose their commandants, — he was greeted by a disapproving sound from his own soldiers.

A cry was heard, —

“Pitou! Pitou! Pitou!”

“Yes, Pitou!” echoed the men of the other villages, offended at an inferiority which they attributed to their instructors.

Pitou on his white horse placed himself at the head of his men, to whom he gave the right, and gave the command in such a tone that the very oaks trembled.

As if by miracle, the broken files united, the manœuvres were well executed, Pitou made such good use of his books and of Father Clovis’s instructions.

The *army*, with one voice, saluted him *Imperator* on the field of battle.

Pitou dismounted, and, covered with sweat, received the salutations of the crowd.

He did not, however, see Catherine.

All at once Pitou heard her voice. It was not necessary for him to seek her. She had sought him.

His triumph was immense.

"What!" said she, with an air in strange contrast with her pale face. "Have you become proud because you are a great general?"

"Oh, no!" said Pitou. "Good morning, mademoiselle."

Then to Madame Billot, —

"I am happy to salute you, Madame Billot."

Turning to Catherine, he said, —

"Mademoiselle, you are wrong. I am not a great general, but only a young man anxious to serve my country."

What he had said was borne through the crowd, and treated as a sublime sentiment.

"Ange," said Catherine, "I must speak to you."

"Ah! at last! at last!" thought Pitou; and said aloud, "When you please."

"Return to the farm with us."

"Very well."

CHAPTER LXIX.

HONEY AND ABSINTHE.

CATHERINE contrived to be alone with Pitou, in spite of her mother's presence.

Old Mother Billot had some gossips, who walked by her and maintained conversation.

Catherine, who had left her horse, returned on foot with Pitou.

Such arrangements surprise no one in the country, where people are more indulgent than they are in great cities.

It seemed natural enough for Monsieur Pitou to talk to Mademoiselle Billot. It may be none ever noticed it.

On that day all enjoyed the silence and thickness of the woods. All glory and happiness seem to reside amid the primeval grandeur of the forests.

"Here I am, Mademoiselle Catherine," said Pitou, when they were alone.

"Why have you for so long a time not visited our farm? That is wrong, Pitou."

"But, mademoiselle, you know the reason!"

"I do not. You are wrong."

Pitou bit his lips. It annoyed him to hear Catherine tell a falsehood.

She saw and understood his expression.

"But, Pitou, I have something to tell you."

"Ah!" said he.

"The other day you saw me in the hut?"

"Yes, I did."

"You saw me?"

"Yes."

She blushed.

"What were you doing there?"

"You knew me?"

"At first I did not. I did afterwards."

"What do you mean?"

"Sometimes one does not pay attention."

"Certainly."

Both were silent, for each had too much to think of.

Catherine said at last, "Then it was you? What were you doing there? Why did you hide yourself?"

"Hide myself?"

"Why?"

"Curiosity might have made me."

"I have no curiosity."

She stamped the ground most impatiently with her little foot.

"You were," said she, "in a place you do not visit often."

"You saw I was reading."

"I do not know."

"If you saw me, you do."

"I did see you very distinctly. But what were you reading?"

"My *Tactics*."

"What is that?"

"A book in which I learned what I have since taught my men. To study, madame, one must be alone."

"True; in the forest nothing disturbs you."

"Nothing."

They were again silent; the rest of the party rode before them.

"When you study thus," said Catherine, "do you study long?"

"Whole days sometimes."

"Then you had been long there?"

"Very long."

"It is surprising that I did not see you when I came."

Here she told an untruth, but was so bold that Pitou was convinced. He was sorry for her. All her wants were due only to the want of circumspection.

"I may have slept. I sometimes do when I study too much."

"Well, while you slept I must have passed you. I went to the old pavilion."

"Ah!" said Pitou, "what pavilion?"

Catherine blushed again. This time her manner was so affected that he could not believe her.

"Charny's pavilion. There is the best balm in the country. I had hurt myself, and needed some leaves. I hurt my hand."

As if he wished to believe her, Ange looked at her hands.

"Ah!" said she, "not my hands, but my feet."

"Did you get what you wanted?"

"Ah! yes. My feet, you see, are well."

Catherine fancied that she had succeeded; she fancied Pitou had seen and knew nothing. She said, and it was a great mistake:—

"Then Monsieur Pitou would have *cut* us. He is proud of his position, and disdains peasants since he has become an officer."

Pitou was wounded. So great a sacrifice, even though feigned, demands another recompense; and as Catherine seemed to seek to mystify Pitou, and as she doubtless laughed at him when she was with Isidor de Charny, all Pitou's good humour passed away. Self-love is a viper asleep, on which it is never prudent to tread unless you crush it at once.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "it seems you cut me."

"How so?"

"First, you refused me work, and drove me from the farm. I said nothing to Monsieur Billot, for, thank God! I yet have a heart and hands."

"I assure you, Monsieur Pitou —"

"It matters not; of course you can manage your own affairs. If, then, you saw me at the pavilion, you should have spoken to me, instead of running away, as if you were robbing an orchard."

The viper had stung. Catherine was uneasy.

"Or as if your barn had been on fire. Mademoiselle, I had not the time to shut my book before you sprang on the pony and rode away. He had been tied long enough, though, to eat up all the bark of an oak."

"Then a tree was destroyed; but why, Monsieur Pitou, do you tell me this?"

Catherine felt that all presence of mind was leaving her.

"Ah! you were gathering balm," said Pitou. "A *horse* does much in an hour."

Catherine said, "In an hour?"

"No horse, mademoiselle, could strip a tree of that size in less time. You must have been collecting more balm than would suffice to cure all the wounds received at the Bastile."

Catherine could not say a word. Pitou was silent; he knew he had said enough. Mother Billot paused at the cross-road to bid adieu to her friends.

Pitou was in agony, for he felt the pain of the wounds he had inflicted, and was like a bird just ready to fly away.

"Well! what says the officer?" said Madame Billot.

"That he wishes you good day."

"Then good day. Come, Catherine."

"Ah! tell me the truth," murmured Catherine.

"What?"

"Are you not yet my friend?"

"Alas!" said the poor fellow, who, as yet without experience, began to make love, through confessions which only the skilful know how to manage.

Pitou felt that his secret was rushing to his lips; he felt that the first word Catherine said would place him in her power.

He was aware, though, if he spoke, he should die when Catherine confessed to him what as yet he only suspected.

He was silent as an old Roman, and bowed to Catherine with a respect which touched the young girl's heart, — bowed to Madame Billot, and disappeared.

Catherine made a bound as if she would follow him.

Madame Billot said to her daughter, —

“He is a good lad, and has much feeling.”

When alone, Pitou began a long monologue, which we will omit.

The poor lad did not know that in love there is both honey and absinthe, and that Charny had all the honey.

From this hour, during which she had suffered horribly, Catherine conceived a kind of respectful fear for Pitou, which a few days before she was far from feeling.

When one cannot inspire love, it is not bad to inspire fear; and Pitou, who had great ideas of personal dignity, would not have been a little flattered had he discovered the existence even of such a sentiment.

As he was not, however, physiologist enough to see what the ideas of a woman a league and a half from him are, he went and sang a countless number of songs, the theme of which was unfortunate love.

Pitou at last reached his own room, where he found his chivalric guard had placed a sentinel. The man, dead drunk, lay on a bench with his gun across his legs.

Pitou awoke him.

He then learned that his thirty men, good and true, had ordered an entertainment at old Father Tellier's, — the old man was the Vatel of Haramont, — and that twelve ladies were to crown the Turenne who had overcome the Condé of the next canton.

Pitou was too much fatigued for his stomach not to have suffered.

Pitou, being led by his sentinel to the banquet-hall, was received with acclamations which shook the very walls.

He bowed, sat down in silence, and even attacked the veal and salad.

This state of feeling lasted until his stomach was filled, and his heart relieved.

CHAPTER LXX.

AN UNEXPECTED DENOUEMENT.

FEASTING after sorrow is either an increase of grief or an absolute consolation.

Pitou saw that his grief was increased.

He arose when his companions could not.

He made even an oration on Spartan sobriety to them, when they were all dead drunk.

He bade them go away when they were asleep under the table.

We must say that the ladies disappeared during the dessert.

Pitou thought, amid all his glory and honour, the prominent subject was his last interview with Catherine.

Amid the half hints of his memory he recalled the fact that her hand had often touched his, and that sometimes her shoulder had pressed his own, and that he on certain occasions had known all her beauties.

He then looked around him like a man awaking from a drunken dream.

He asked the shadows why so much severity towards a young woman, perfect in grace, could have been in his heart.

Pitou wished to reinstate himself with Catherine.

But how?

A Lovelace would have said, "That girl laughs at and deceives me. I will follow her example."

Such a character would have said, "I will despise her, and make her ashamed of her love as of so much disgrace.

I will terrify and dishonour her, and make the path to her rendezvous painful."

Pitou, like a good fellow, though heated with wine and love, said to himself, "Some time I will make Catherine ashamed that she did not love me."

Pitou's chaste ideas would not permit him to fancy that Catherine did aught but coquet with Monsieur de Charny, and that she laughed at his laced boots and golden spurs.

How delighted Pitou was to think that Catherine was not in love with either a boot or a spur!

Some day Monsieur Isidor would go to the city and marry a countess. Catherine then would seem to him an old romance.

All these ideas occupied the mind of the commander of the National Guard of Haramont.

To prove to Catherine that he was a good fellow, he began to recall all the bad things he had heard during the day.

But Catherine had said some of them. He thought he would tell them to her.

A drunken man without a watch has no idea of time.

Pitou had no watch, and had not gone ten paces before he was as drunk as Bacchus, or his son Thespis.

He did not remember that he had left Catherine three hours before, and that, half an hour later, she must have reached Pisseleux.

To that place he hurried.

Let us leave him among the trees, bushes, and briers, threshing with his stick the great forest of Orleans, which returned blows with usury.

Let us return to Catherine, who went home with her mother.

There was a swamp behind the farm, and when there they had to ride in single file.

The old lady went first.

Catherine was about to go when she heard a whistle.

She turned, and saw in the distance the cap of Isidor's valet.

She let her mother ride on, and the latter, being but a few paces from home, became careless.

The servant came.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "my master wishes to see you to-night, and begs you to meet him somewhere at eleven, if you please."

"Has he met with any accident?" inquired Catherine, with much alarm.

"I do not know. He received to-night a letter with a black seal from Paris. I have already been here an hour."

The clock of Villers-Cotterêts struck ten.

Catherine looked around.

"Well, the place is dark; tell your master I will wait for him here."

The man rode away.

Catherine followed her mother home.

What could Isidor have to tell her at such an hour?

Love meetings assume more smiling forms.

That was not the question. Isidor wished to see her, and the hour was of no importance. She would have met him in the graveyard of Villers-Cotterêts at midnight.

She would not then even think, but kissed her mother, and went to her room.

Her mother went to bed.

She suspected nothing, and if she had, it mattered not, for Catherine was a being of a superior order.

Catherine neither undressed nor went to bed.

She heard the chime of half after ten. At a quarter before eleven she put out the lamp and went into the dining-room. The windows opened into the yard. She sprang out.

She hurried to the appointed place with a beating heart, placing one hand on her bosom and the other on her head. She had not to wait long.

She heard the feet of a horse.

She stepped forward.

Isidor was before her.

Without dismounting, he took her hand, lifted her into the saddle, and said, —

“Catherine, yesterday my brother Georges was killed at Versailles. My brother Olivier has sent for me; I must go.”

Catherine uttered an exclamation of grief, and clasped Charny in her arms.

“If,” said she, “they killed one brother, they will kill another.”

“Be that as it may, my eldest brother has sent for me. Catherine, you know I love you.”

“Stay, stay!” said the poor girl, who was only aware of the fact that Isidor was going.

“Honour and vengeance appeal to me.”

“Alas! alas!”

And she threw herself, pale and trembling, into his arms.

A tear fell from Charny’s eyes on the young girl’s brow.

“You weep; thank God, you love me!”

“Yes; but my eldest brother has written to me, and you see I must obey.”

“Go, then; I will keep you no longer.”

“One last kiss.”

“Adieu!”

The young girl consented, knowing that nothing could keep Isidor from obeying this order of his brother. She slid from his arms to the ground.

The young man looked away, sighed, hesitated, but under the influence of the order he had received galloped away, casting one long, last look on Catherine.

A servant followed him.

Catherine lay alone where she fell, completely closing the narrow way.

Just then a man appeared on the top of the hill, towards Villers-Cotterêts, rapidly advancing towards the farm, and he was very near treading on the inanimate body that lay in the pathway.

He lost his balance, stumbled and fell, and was not aware of the body until he touched it.

"Catherine!" cried he, "Catherine dead!"

He uttered a cry of such agony that he aroused the very dogs of the farm.

"Who, who has killed her?" He sat pale, trembling and inert, with the body on his knees.

THE END.





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